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NUCES PHILOSOPHICÆ;

OR, THE

PHILOSOPHY OF THINGS

AS DEVELOPED FROM THE

STUDY OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF WORDS.

BY

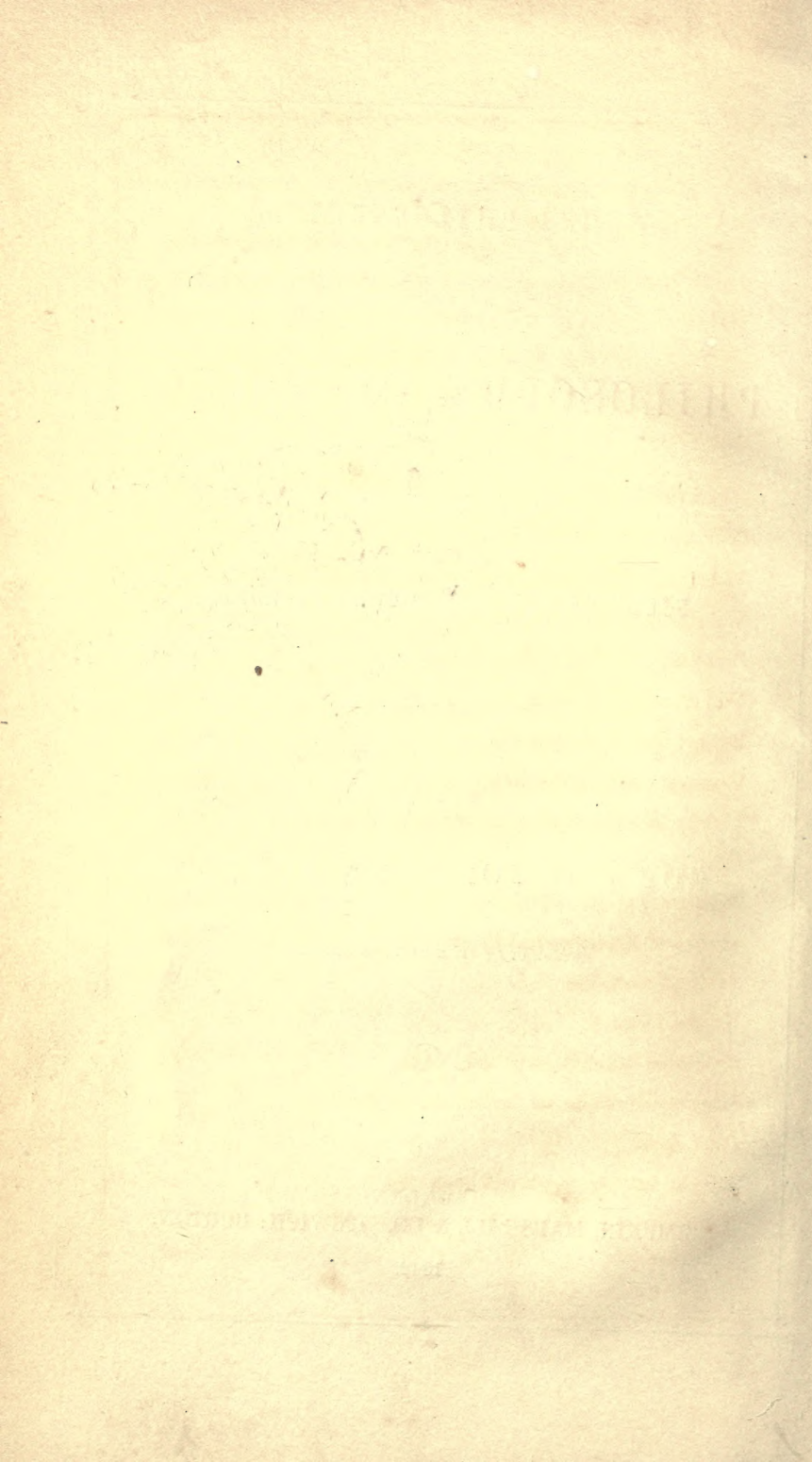
EDWARD JOHNSON, SURGEON,

AUTHOR OF "LIFE, HEALTH, AND DISEASE."

LONDON:

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1842.





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J74

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## P R E F A C E .

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THE chief object of Horne Tooke's work was to prove presumptively, by circumstantial evidence drawn from the nature of language, that there is no such thing as abstraction.

Of this work Lord Brougham has said, that it "is so eminently natural and reasonable" that "all men are convinced of its truth."

The object of the present work is to apply this doctrine of no-abstraction to metaphysics, morality, and politics.

Of Horne Tooke, Lord Brougham, after praising him to the very echo, says: "but he was apt to think he had discovered a decisive argument, or solved a political, or a metaphysical, or an ethical problem, when he had only found the original meaning of a word." But herein Lord B. belies Horne Tooke—who did not care three straws whether a word were used in its original meaning or not. He only required that every word should have an INTELLIGIBLE meaning of some sort—and he gave the original meaning of words only to show that all words had an intelligible meaning once, and must have an INTELLIGIBLE meaning NOW, or else cease to be words, and become mere brutish gabble. His grand doctrine is, that every word is a noun or name, and either the sign of some SENSIBLE OBJECT or else of other words, which other words are the signs or names of SENSIBLE OBJECTS. Even my Lord B. admits this to be Horne Tooke's leading idea; for he says of it: "the simple grandeur of this leading idea, which runs through the whole of Mr. Tooke's system, at once recommends it to our acceptance."



Thus, in all discussions about Mind, Horne Tooke would say: "the word Mind is the sign of other words, viz. remembered things—and these words are the collective sign of all the particular names of all those sensible objects which a man can remember—just as the words "pack of hounds" are the collective sign for all the particular names of all the particular dogs in the pack. This is the original meaning of the word, and this is a meaning which I can clearly understand. Nevertheless, though this be the original meaning, I do not require you to use it with this meaning—only, whatever meaning you attach to it, let it be, like this, an intelligible one—that is to say, let its meaning be one or more sensible objects. Otherwise I cannot understand it—it degenerates into a mere senseless gabble, and all arguments in which the use of the word is involved become mere unintelligible noise." Thus Horne Tooke would have reasoned. "For," says he, "that is not a word which is not the name of a thing." For even those words which are merely the signs of other words are still the names of things—for those *other words*, whether written or spoken, are still things cognizable by the senses.

It was not that Horne Tooke used the original meaning of words as arguments—but that he insisted upon all men giving to their words an intelligible meaning of *some sort*—that is, making them the signs, directly or indirectly, of sensible objects—and THEN he used their INABILITY to do so as an argument to prove that *their* arguments were mere sounds signifying nothing. He did not resort to the meanings of words to solve any problem of his own whatever. He only used them to show, that his adversary's solution of any metaphysical, political, or ethical problem—or any solution but his own—was absurd. He drove his opponent from house to house until, if he did not choose to take up his quarters in his, Horne Tooke's own house, he soon found himself without any quarters at all. His arguments were not *for* himself, but *against* his adversary. Thus if Kant were arguing with Horne Tooke, the former would scarcely have opened his lips before the latter would cry out: "stop! stop! your words are unintelligible! You are gibble-gabbling! A parrot is preaching! Stop and make me understand the meaning of the words you are using APART FROM THE

WORDS THEMSELVES. Otherwise your argument is to me “*vox et præterea nihil*.” And if Kant could not do this—which he certainly could not—then Horne Tooke would have seated himself with a perfectly satisfied air, and whistled Lillibullero throughout all the rest of Kant’s argument, as a thing perfectly unanswerable, because perfectly unintelligible. Horne Tooke’s argument was the *reductio ad absurdum*, viz. the absurdity of using words, i. e. sounds, for which a man can give no *other meaning* than so many *other words*, i. e. so many *other sounds*.

If this mode of argument were introduced into the House of Commons by such a man as Canning—or into our conservative journals by any man of ordinary talent—I mean this manner of insisting that every man shall give an intelligible meaning for his *words*, i. e. for the sounds which he utters—what perfect mincemeat would it make of all the nonsense of a large party of transcendental improvers and reformers in that House!

How curious that men should mistake *sounds* for anything else BUT sounds!

He who sees nothing in Horne Tooke but a search after the meanings of words, reads with one eye open and the other shut.

Another object of Horne Tooke, and a necessary one to the accomplishment of the structure which he desired to build—for “I know,” says he, “for what building I am laying the foundation,” p. 534, vol. i, 2nd edition, 1798—was to account for the presence of abstract nouns (and some other words) in language. And this he did by showing how they CAME there, and what they do there.

If words do not signify things, what in the world *do* they signify? Ideas. But *idea itself* is but a word!—and what I want to know is the *thing* which that word *signifies*.

I have in the body of the work shown that the word *idea* is merely an *additional* name which we give to a thing which we have *seen*, in order to distinguish that thing from those which we have *not* seen. Thus I have in my mind several ideas of several horses—that is, I have in my mind several *ideal horses*—and I use these words *ideas* and *ideal* in connection with the word horses, in order to distinguish these horses which I have seen from those which I have *not* seen; and of which, therefore, I have no idea whatever.



The Græco-English phrase, "I have an *IDEA* of a horse," is exactly equivalent with the *PURELY* English phrase, "I have had a *SIGHT* of a horse."

I am told there is a something called a yam, which grows something like a potato, looks something like a pumpkin, and is eaten abroad as a substitute for bread. Now your Kantian transcendental mystifiers would say that, from all this, I have acquired an idea—or probably it would be a *sort* of an idea—of a yam. But I say that I am still without any idea of a yam whatever; and the only ideas the word yam can excite in me are still only the ideas of a potato, a loaf of bread, and a pumpkin. I have only acquired a new name for an old idea. The pumpkin has become a yam as well as a pumpkin. But when I have *seen* a yam—when any yam has become to me a *seen* yam—then I shall thenceforward carry about me an *ideal* yam, or the *idea* of a yam.

But Professor Stewart would tell you that, although I have not acquired any idea of a yam, I have acquired a *notion* of a yam. And this is true—for *notion* merely means *knowing*—and I do now know more about a yam than I did before—for I now *know that I have been TOLD* that a yam is like a pumpkin—and this is all that I now know about a yam more than I knew before.

In brief, this is Horne Tooke's doctrine concerning words, viz., that all words (excepting those which are the *immediate* names of sensible objects) are the signs of *other words*—and that these *other words* are the signs of *still other words*—and so on, "in *continued progression*," (I quote his own words) until you get at last to some *SENSIBLE OBJECTS other than words*—which *sensible objects* constitute the meaning in nature of *all the signs* through which we have travelled in order to get at them.

It is quite manifest that all words which do not *POINT* at *sensible objects* are "*verba et voces et præterea NIHIL.*" For that which is not a thing is clearly *NO-thing*, i. e. *NOTHING*. The word *nothing* may, in every instance, have its place supplied by the words *not-any-thing*. I should be glad to ask the ghost of John Locke how he could realise any idea of *not-any-thing*!!

I cannot here help mentioning an instance of the manner in

which words are constantly used without any significance whatever. I take the example from Coleridge's "Aids to Reflection"—a work purporting "to direct the reader's attention to the value of the science of words, their use and abuse, and the incalculable advantages attached to the habit of using them appropriately, and with a distinct knowledge of their primary, derivative, and metaphorical senses."

AFTER THIS! Mr. Coleridge says: "God is a circle, whose centre is *everywhere*, and circumference *nowhere*."

Now it is self-evident that there can be neither circle nor centre *without a circumference*. For *circle and circumference* are two words meaning the same thing. The circle is the circumference, and the circumference is the circle. And the *centre* of a circle is a point which is equi-distant from every point of the circumference. Without a circumference, therefore, there can be NEITHER CENTRE NOR CIRCLE. If such a use of words could prove anything at all, these of Mr. Coleridge would prove that there is no God. For, if he be a circle having a centre, but no circumference, he is an *impossible existence*.

But if Mr. Coleridge meant this as an illustration by comparison, then it is an illustration which throws no light—for God cannot resemble an impossible existence, i. e. a nonentity—unless Mr. Coleridge considered God to be a nonentity also—which we know he did not. Therefore Mr. Coleridge's words are merely so many words arranged on paper according to syntactical rules, and the laws which govern language, but wholly destitute of significance.

The truth is (and Mr. Coleridge's whole work is one continued instance of it) that we often work with words precisely as we do, says A. B. Johnson, with figures. You may sit down and fill a slate with figures, divided into separate little collections, and all duly arranged, multiplied, divided, subtracted, added—producing, at every step, certain regular results—according to the laws which govern numbers. But if these figures do not represent some sensible objects—if there be not in *rerum natura*, any sensible objects which they can be *made to represent*—when you have filled your slate with figures, and little clusters of arithmetical processes, what information have you gained or commu-



nicated? Clearly none whatever. Thus men work with words according to the grammatic laws which govern words, precisely as we may work with figures according to the arithmetic laws which govern numbers. And each individual arithmetic process, of several of which the whole arithmetic process is made up, resembles each individual sentence, of a great number of which the whole verbal process, i. e. the whole argument of a book, is composed. But if there be in the universe no sensible objects to which either the figures or the words can be referred—then both the words and the figures are insignificant.

This is precisely what we are daily in the habit of doing, not in the language of figures, but in the language of words.

Every word, like every figure, is an unintelligible and useless sign, unless it (not *be*, but) CAN BE referred to some sensible object, whenever an explanation of its meaning is required.

I have given the words *unless* or *dismiss* as an instance of the manner in which this is done.

Lord Brougham admits unequivocally, and admires exceedingly, Horne Tooke's system of language, which teaches that every word in every language is the sign of one or more sensible objects, and that there is *no such thing as abstraction*. And the Rev. E. Bushby declares that "it is now generally admitted that the mind has no such power." And yet in spite of this his own unequivocal admission, my Lord Brougham labors to prove that the mind itself is a pure abstraction!! What can he mean? There can be no alternative between abstraction and no-abstraction! And if no-abstraction, then there cannot be that abstraction which Lord B. calls mind! Nor can there be any of those other abstractions called justice, understanding, right, wrong, intellect, honor, thinking principle, &c. &c. If Lord B. admit the existence of an abstraction called Mind, then he denies Horne Tooke's doctrine of no-abstraction. And if he admit the doctrine of no-abstraction, then he, by that admission, denies the existence of that abstraction called Mind—and all other abstractions whatever. There cannot be a little abstraction *here* and a little abstraction *there*, and yet no abstraction *anywhere*!!

One of Lord B.'s proofs is (as he himself calls it) a very

*remarkable one.* He says, whenever a man uses the personal pronouns I, we, us, &c., he gives a proof that he is referring to something independent of his material self. When my Lord Brougham was a fine intelligent boy at school, as I am sure he was, he knew very well that a pronoun is a noun or name put instead of another noun or name. And that when he said (speaking of a task which he had learned) "I know *MY* task," he meant, by the words *I* and *my*, precisely what he would have meant had he said, "*Henry Brougham* knows *Henry Brougham's* task"—the pronouns *I* and *my* standing severally for the two words *Henry Brougham*—and these two words standing in their turn for that intelligent little animal known by that name.

The use of these personal pronouns is a key to the whole secret of language. For all those troublesome words which have so bothered the world are nothing but pronouns—that is, single nouns or names used instead of other nouns or names, for the sake of convenience and despatch. When my Lord Brougham uses the pronoun I, if any one were to ask him what "I" means, he would say: "it means Henry Brougham." But if any one ask him what the words "Henry Brougham" mean, no words can tell—he can only convey their meaning by pointing to his own person—by showing himself to the inquirer, and thus causing his person to reveal itself to the senses of the other. And it is precisely the same with these abstract nouns.

Only conceive how troublesome it would be, if, in talking, a man were obliged to use his own name at full length, every time he wished to refer to himself. The little short pronoun "I" saves him all this time and trouble. Suppose Lord Brougham wanted to say: "I went to *my* desk and took out *my* pen-knife and mended *my* pen." If it were not for these pronouns he must say: "Lord Brougham went to Lord Brougham's desk and took out Lord Brougham's pen-knife and mended Lord Brougham's pen."

If it were not for those pronouns called abstract nouns, this difficulty and trouble and consumption of time would be magnified ten-thousand-fold. No one can help seeing this.

Mind signifies knowledge. And knowledge is the collective term for all those sensible objects which, under various circum-

stances in various kinds of combination, some in motion, some at rest, &c. &c., have at various times revealed themselves to the human senses—whose forms have been *gotten*, and not *forgotten*, by the senses. And all those actions said to be performed by us or by our minds, such as hoping, fearing, willing, thinking, (except that part of the operation of thinking which consists of talking to ourselves) remembering, &c. &c.—are all of them actions performed, not by us or by our minds, but by things UPON US. They are the effects of things *upon us*—revelations of the influences of things upon us—as the magnet reveals *to* the steel its influence *upon* the steel. And those phrases, such as, “I hope, I will, I remember, I wish, I love,” &c. &c., are merely modes of speech, first adopted for convenience and despatch, and now erroneously sought to be accounted for by a false reasoning on the nature of man, and his relation to external things.

The true nature, cause, and purpose of this mode of speech, as well as of the false reasonings which have arisen out of it, become manifest in the phrases, ‘I see,’ ‘I hear,’ ‘I taste,’ when the action pointed at is clearly an operation performed by things upon us. But if possible, it is still *more* manifest in such phrases as : ‘how would boiled beef *eat* with melted butter for sauce?’ ‘how does that horse *ride*?’ ‘he *rides* very well on the snaffle, but very ill on the curb.’ We do not mean either that the boiled beef performs the operation of eating, or the horse that of riding.

Some overwise critic may call this the language of the kitchen and stable. So much the better, if it be. It is to the uneducated that we must look, if we would discover the true *nature* of language.

Man can perform no operations or actions but by means of his muscular organs. In everything else he is passive.

Let any one look through Bagster’s English Hexapla, and he will be amused to see how the word mind has been gradually perverted, through the several versions of the scripture, from its original sense of knowledge, until at last it has been brought to signify a mere abstraction—that is, nothing at all.



## WICLIF'S VERSION (1380.)

“For whi who knewe the WITTE of the Lord?”—Rom. xi. 34.

## AUTHORISED VERSION (1611.)

“For who hath knowen the MIND of the Lord?”

## GREEK.

“Τίς γὰρ ἐγνώ NOTN Κυρίου.”

## WICLIF.

“But the WITTES of hem ben astonyed.”—2 Cor. iii. 14.

## RHEIMS VERSION (1582.)

“But their SENSES were dulled.”

## AUTHORISED.

“But their MINDS were blinded.”

## GREEK.

“Ἀλλ’ ἐπαρώθη τὰ NOHMATA αὐτῶν.”\*

## WICLIF.

“Veynli bolned with WIT of his fleisch.”—Coloss. ii. 18.

## RHEIMS.

“In vaine puffed up by the SENSE of his flesh.”

## AUTHORISED.

“Vainly puffed up by his fleshly MIND.”

## GREEK.

“Εἰκῇ φυσιοῦμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ NOOΣ τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ.”†

## WICLIF.

“God bi took hem in to a reprevable WITTE.”—Rom. i. 28.

## RHEIMS.

“God delivered them up to a reprobate SENSE.”‡

## AUTHORISED.

“God gave them over to a reprobate MIND.”

\* “Τὰ NOHMATA αὐτῶν”—their THOUGHTS.

† “Υπὸ τοῦ NOOΣ τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ”—“by mind of his flesh!” Is this intelligible? Surely, in order to make it intelligible, it must be rendered “by the knowledge of his body”—that is, obtained by his bodily senses.

‡ What can *sense* mean if not knowledge?

## RHEIMS.

“And they see him sitting clothed and wel in his WITTES.”—  
Mark v. 15.

## AUTHORISED.

“And see him sitting clothed and in his right MIND.”

To be in one's “wittes” or “mind” is to have a correct KNOWLEDGE of the things and circumstances wherewith one is surrounded. I need hardly say that *witte*, at the time when Wiclif wrote, signified (as it properly does now) knowledge : thus,

## WICLIF.

“And whidir I go ye WITEN ; and ye WITEN the wey.”—  
John xiv. 4.

## AUTHORISED.

“And whither I go ye KNOW, and the way ye KNOW.”

## WICLIF.

“Thomas seith to hym : Lord, we WITEN not whidir thou goist, and how moun (must) we WITE the weie.”—John xiv. 5.

## AUTHORISED.

“Thomas saith unto him : Lord, we KNOW not whither thou goest, and how can we KNOW the way ?”

## WICLIF.

“If the world hatith you, WITE ye that it hadde me in hate rather thanne you.”—John xv. 18.

## AUTHORISED.

“If the world hate you, ye KNOW that it hated me before it hated you.”

I have somewhere said that no one entertained a more contemptuous opinion of grammar and grammarians than Horne Tooke. If any one should think fit to quote the following passage from the “Diversions of Purley” in contravention of my assertion : “I think grammar difficult, but I am very far from looking upon it as foolish ; indeed so far, that I consider it as absolutely necessary in the search after philosophical truth ?”—I desire that he will also quote and place in juxta-position with it the following, which occurs two or three pages further on :

“I acknowledge *philosophical* grammar (to which ONLY my suspected compliment was intended) to be a most necessary step towards wisdom and true knowledge.” Philosophical grammar is removed from that which is usually understood by grammar, exactly as far as sense is removed from nonsense—and as far as the labors of grammarians are removed from the labors of Horne Tooke.

It may be alleged against me that Horne Tooke himself did acknowledge what he called the “rights of man,” viz. “whatever it is ordered (by nature) that he shall have.” But he did not state wherein he conceived those rights to consist. And I might shelter myself behind the omission if I chose. But I do not so chose. I will admit that he seems to imply the existence of certain popular rights. Horne Tooke was a man of warm and even violent political feeling. And here the keen eye of his sober judgment was blinded by the smoke which issued from the political fire that burned within him. He hung a sneer upon the nose of his colloquist against old Johnson’s “sacred, indefeasible, inherent, hereditary, rights of monarchs”—not perceiving that that sneer might as justly have been turned against his own popular rights.

But should such an allegation be made against me it would be a very inane one. For I have no concern with Horne Tooke, or with Horne Tooke’s feelings, or opinions. I am only concerned with Horne Tooke’s book, and the reasoning therein contained. And although my admiration of his talents stops, perhaps, but one step short of idolatry, yet not on the mere OPINION even of Horne Tooke will I pin my faith. I do not, like Dr. Beattie with regard to John Locke, trouble myself a moment about what an *author means*—I only concern myself with what his writings prove. To the readers of Euclid’s Elements of Mathematics, what does it signify what Euclid *meant*? The only question is: “what does Euclid’s reasoning *prove*?”

But I also admit certain “rights of man”—which words I also define to signify “whatever it is *ordered* (by nature) that he shall have.” Here Horne Tooke stops, while I proceed a step farther, and state wherein these rights (or this order) consist, viz. in the order or command of nature that he shall



have all that he can get *with the least injury to his self-love*. But as this law of nature is universal, (for nature knows nothing about poor men and rich men, king and people) it is clear that the same law which orders the GOVERNED *to get and keep all they can, &c.*, also orders their GOVERNORS *to get and keep all they can, &c.* I think I never remember to have read or heard (as committed by men of education and talent) so curious and extraordinary a blunder as that which supposes that nature has laid down certain laws for particular classes of men—laws for that class called “the people,” and laws for that other class called kings, statesmen, or ministers. Nature legislates for MAN, not for classes of MEN. Whatever law, right, or order she has imposed upon the prince, she has also imposed upon the people—and whatever on the people, also on the prince. And there can be, therefore, no rights of the people which are not also equally the rights of all those men who are not embraced within the meaning of the word “people.” But the only laws which nature has instituted for the guidance and conduct of the “people” are the laws of self-love and parental affection. THEREFORE self-love and parental affection are also the only laws which govern the conduct of kings, ministers and statesmen. And these laws are universal, and common to all animals—to mite, maggot, mammoth, and man.

But it may be said that all this depends upon the assumption that the word *right*, and the words law, order, &c. are equivalent terms. It does so. This is to me the only intelligible meaning of the word right which I can find. But if you can find and show me *another intelligible meaning*, I will hold your objection to be sound. But if you cannot—and if you be a reasonable man—that reason will compel you to adopt *my* sense of the word. Why? The answer is plain enough—“because it is the *only intelligible meaning* of which the word is susceptible.” And herein you have a specimen of Horne Tooke’s mode of argument. Here are, said he, certain words; and here are certain *intelligible* meanings which were originally attached to them. You say these words have lost their old meanings, and acquired new ones. Very well—make their meanings *cognizable* and *intelligible* to me—only let me know what they are—then I

WITH YOU will adopt the new meanings. But if you cannot do this—if you cannot *communicate* their meanings either to me or to anybody else—if you have nothing to give me but words, which are nothing but sounds—then YOU WITH ME must rest content with the old meanings, or else continue to use words which are confessedly unintelligible.

My reasoning depends upon the intelligible use of such words as right, law, ought, duty, &c. &c.—precisely as *all mathematical reasoning whatever* depends, and must depend, upon an intelligible use of such words as line, sine, tangent, angle, centre, arc, square, &c. If these words were used in an arbitrary or unintelligible sense, the whole science of mathematics would instantly be thrown into the same confusion as that which characterizes metaphysics and moral philosophy.

There wants but an intelligible use of *all words* to make these latter sciences as unerring as the mathematical. So true is that aphorism of Horne Tooke that “all sciences whatever must finally centre in the science of words.” Who, therefore, shall presume to say that a treatise concerning the nature of words is a treatise *ὑπερ οντου σκιας*? Who shall contend that the philosophy of words has nothing to do with the philosophy of things.

To cut, to carve, to chisel, to chop, &c., are all only so many different names given to *one sensible operation*—that of *cutting*. *Cut* is its *general name*, let the circumstances under which the operation is performed be what they may. The others are so many *particular names* given to the *same operation* when performed under particular circumstances. In like manner, to SPEAK, to dedicate, to preach, to pray, to consecrate, to lecture, to call, to name, to pronounce sentence, to JUDGE, and many others are only so many different names given to *one and the same sensible operation*—that of *speaking*. SPEAK is the *general name*—all the others are so many *particular names* given to the *same sensible operation* when performed under *particular circumstances*. To JUDGE is an English form given to the Latin word *ju-dicare*, i. e. *jus-dicare*,\* i. e. *to speak the law*. JUDGE

\* I suppose no one will doubt that *dicere*, to speak, and *dicare*, to consecrate, to vow, to promise, (all of them ceremonies performed by words) are one and the same word.

(the noun) is the Latin word *ju-dex*, *ju-dix*, *ju-dies*, *ju-dic-ans*, *ju-s-dicans*, i. e. *speaking the law*, or one who *speaks the law*. The English phrase to judge, therefore, signifies *to speak*—under those particular circumstances under which a *judge speaks*. In a word, to do what the judge does. Judgment, therefore, signifies *speech*—not generally—but that *particular speech* which is spoken by a judge in his judicial character. For instance, here is a man arraigned for a supposed crime. His fate depends, after certain ceremonies, examinations, &c. upon a particular *speech* to be spoken by the judge. And to speak this *speech* is to pronounce *judgment*, and to pronounce *judgment* is to speak this *speech*. The Anglo-Saxon verb for *to judge* was *dem-an*—that is, to do what the *Dema* did—*Dema* being the Anglo-Saxon for a judge—that is, to speak the law, to pronounce sentence, judgment, or doom. And *doom* was the Anglo-Saxon word for judgment—and, being the past participle of *deman*, to speak-what-the-judge-speaks, signifies that which was *spoken* by the judge—or the *speech* of the judge.

Who does not see, in all this, a clear and intelligible refutation of all the nonsense and stuff that has been, for ages, said, sung, and written, about that pretended *operation of the mind called judging*? The jury are thinged or influenced by the words of the witnesses—and the judge is *thinged* or influenced by the written law which he has read and remembers—and the verdict, i. e. true-speech of the jury, and the judgment, i. e. doom or speech of the judge, are the result of these influences of words and things upon them. And the whole process is a process of influences—or effects of words and things—upon the men constituting the judge and jury—in other words, a process of REASONING, i. e. THINGING or being THINGED—a process of THINKING (i. e. of speaking) and of being THINGED—(i. e. spoken to, or influenced) by THINGS—a process of JUDGE-ing, i. e. of judge-acting, i. e. of doing what the judge does. Both judge and jury are purely PASSIVE till they SPEAK.

I am told that Dr. Pritchard, in his *Physical History of Man*, a work which I have not read, has declared that civilized men are stronger and more healthy than barbarians. I can hardly think that Dr. Pritchard has made such a declaration. It must



be remembered, however, that in drawing a comparison between the civilized and uncivilized, the comparison must always be made between men of the same race and climate—for instance, between cultivated Germans, and Germans before they became cultivated—and not between Germans and Hottentots. And it must also be made between a whole people, and a whole people, and not between particular individuals. There may be stronger men to be found in civilized communities, possibly, than in any uncivilized community, but in what part of a civilized community shall we find these strong men? Shall we find them chiefly in populous cities and manufacturing towns? Shall we find them among silk-weavers, and cotton-spinners? Shall we find them in banking-houses, and merchants' counting-houses? Behind the counters of linen-drapers and silk-merciers? Shall we find them on the tailor's shop-board? Shall we find them among law students, and divinity students, and medical students? and lawyers, and divines, and physicians? No! We shall find them among farmers' labourers, and brewers' draymen—that is to say, among those classes of a cultivated community which are the **LEAST CULTIVATED!**

It has been one object of my work to show that there is less difference between the animal man and the inferior animals, than is generally supposed. This, with regard to the best mode of legislating for his welfare, is an important truth. There are many useful lessons to be learned in human legislation from a contemplation of the manner in which nature legislates for brutes. “*Simia quam similis, turpissima bestia, nobis!*”

I said I would mention an extremely short and royal road to the acquirement of the dead languages. My son has since put into my hands a book, from which I learn that the plan I had in contemplation has been already adopted by a Mr. Hall for many years with extraordinary success.

To persons *previously acquainted with English grammar*, Mr. Hall has found three months sufficient to communicate a “complete knowledge of the Latin language.”

“Mr. Hall was anxious to introduce it (his system of teaching) to the public in such a manner as satisfactorily to prove its efficacy. With this view he resolved to ascertain the shortest

possible space of time in which an adult, by devoting his entire time and attention, could acquire the rudiments of the grammar, and be able to undergo a public examination in translating, parsing, and scanning the whole of the first book of Virgil's *Æneid*. This trial he commenced with a gentleman who was well versed in English grammar, but not acquainted in the slightest degree with Latin; and such is the superiority which can be gained, in acquiring language, by cultivating and directing aright the *reasoning* powers, instead of relying on the *memory* alone, that at the expiration of only *seven days*, he found his pupil qualified to meet the proposed examination."

The above are extracts from the preface to Mr. Hall's work, entitled, "*The Principal Roots of the Latin Language.*" John Taylor, 13, Waterloo Place, Pall-Mall; and J. A. Hessey, 93, Fleet Street, 1825.

There is an immense number of familiar English words, which are, in fact, Latin words with only a slight alteration in the termination. So that a man who understands well the English language—that is, the meaning of English words, does, in fact, understand the meaning of a vast number of Latin words without knowing it. And the English form and Latin form, and pronunciation, are, for the most part, so much alike, that having once seen them in juxtaposition, it is almost impossible to remember the one without remembering the other. Thus having seen in juxtaposition, the following words:

*Latin* : qualitas—quæstio—imaginatio—figura,

*English* : quality—question—imagination—figure,

and multitudes of others, who can fail to remember both the Latin for the English and the English for the Latin? And it is the acquirement of the meanings of words which constitute the great difficulty in acquiring any language. A man who knows the root-meaning of every word in a dead language, would often be able to spell out the meaning of an author merely by the force of *suggestion*, even without knowing anything of the grammatical construction of that language, provided he were well acquainted with the grammatical construction of his own, and with the philosophical nature of language and grammar generally.

Having learned the *meanings of the roots* and to read a little, a very short time attentively given to the grammar will make him as intimately acquainted with the construction of a dead language as he is with his own. And this is the natural order in which the languages of all countries are acquired by their native infants.

This plan of the juxtaposition of Latin words with the same words *anglicised* is that adopted by Mr. Hall. And whoever will take the trouble to learn thoroughly the inflections of the Latin nouns, adjectives, pronouns, and verbs, from a Valpy's or an Eton grammar, and then proceed systematically with Mr. Hall's work, adhering rigidly to his rules as given in the *Introduction to the Roots*, under the head of "*How to use the Book*," which should be carefully read several times over, I am quite certain he cannot fail to acquire a very competent and sufficient knowledge of the Latin language in three or four months, if he be already well acquainted with English grammar.

But *before* he begins to learn the roots, I would advise him to learn the meanings of the *prepositions* as given at pp. 132-3, that he may recognise them when he sees them in composition with other words, and not be led to suppose he sees a *different* word when he only sees the same word with a preposition prefixed to it.

The addition of a preposition can *never change* the meaning of a root.

Having acquired all Mr. Hall's roots in the order and manner directed in the introduction, and afterwards the derivatives, and having observed the force which certain prepositions have when prefixed to other words, the student will not only be in possession of the meaning of all the roots, but also of all words compounded of those roots and prepositional prefixes.

Before, however, he begins his study, I would strongly recommend him to devote a month to the study of Horne Tooke's "*Diversions of Purley*," in order to acquire a clear notion of the philosophy and nature of grammar *generally*, and to accustom himself to expect, look for, and see, a fixed and radical meaning in every word, and to distinguish this from all its figurative or metaphorical meanings. Knowing the root-meaning of any



word, the metaphorical meanings will flow as *necessary consequences*, since all the metaphorical meanings are founded on, and must have a connexion, and bear a comparison, in some way or other, with the *root-meaning*. This connexion *generally*, though not quite always, as in the case of *sycophant*, which means a fig-seller—will be immediately perceived.

Thus in the word reflection, he will see that it is a Latin word, whose root-meaning is a *bending backwards*, as an ozier twig may be made to do, and that its ordinary metaphorical use has arisen from the absurd notion, that the mind during the act of thinking, bends back upon itself, after the manner of an ozier twig, and “takes a view of its own operations.” Though in what part of the twig these operations are carried on, or at which end of the twig the eyes are situated, by means of which it “takes a view,” deponent sayeth not.

It has been observed by a few, that the subjects treated in this work are, or ought to be, foreign to the studies of a medical man. This is a *great* error. It is intimately connected with the study of *all the sciences*. “All science,” says Horne Tooke, “must ultimately resolve itself into the science of words.” Surely nothing can be more necessary to the successful cultivation of *any science*, than that the student should habituate himself to distinguish clearly between words and things—to look through and beyond the watery waste of *words*, and fix his gaze on the *things* which lie at the bottom! That he should habituate himself *so to think*, that he may never be deceived into the error of mistaking a mere knowledge of *words* for a knowledge of *things*. A. B. Johnson has remarked that the science of medicine, in particular, has suffered much for want of a due attention to the distinction between words and things. And so it has.

“The term *paraplegia* is applied to the paralytic condition of the *lower half of the body*.”—DR. GREGORY.

“Dr. Baillie has seen paraplegia accompanied by giddiness, drowsiness, impaired vision, paralytic dropping of an eyelid, defect of the memory, loss of mental energy, and lastly numbness or weakness of one or both of the *upper* extremities.”—

DR. GREGORY.

Why then paraplegia does NOT consist in a paralytic condition of the "LOWER HALF" of the body—and he who administers his remedies with this view is evidently endeavouring to *cure a word*, instead of curing a disease !

Formerly medicines were prescribed less for the *disease* than for the *name* of the disease. Having personified disease into some mysterious living being, as we have Mind, they prescribed medicine, as it were with a view of *killing* that being by poison ! That which was called a dose of *medicine* to the patient, was thought to be a dose of *poison* to the disease.

Perpetually engaged from ten o'clock in the morning till nine at night, with only the interval of two or three hours in the middle of the day, in the duties of a laborious profession, I have written this work a scrap now, and a scrap then—a scrap in the morning, a scrap at noon, and a scrap at midnight—seldom more, and sometimes less, than a sheet at a time being sent off to be printed in the country as soon as written—so that I have scarcely ever had time to read over what I had once written, before it was sent to press.

It must necessarily happen, therefore, that the work abounds with verbal inaccuracies, faults of style, repetitions, and such-like errors of diction. No critic need remind me of these—first, because I am as well aware of them as he can be—and secondly, because they can be of no consequence to the main argument. With regard to the arguments themselves, it may, I know, often be said of me, "*dum clarus esse laborat, obscurus fit.*" It may even have happened that some of the lesser arguments and illustrations may, for want of time to examine them with sufficient closeness, be found to be no arguments or illustrations at all. But all this makes nothing against my cause—it only proves that the pleading of it has fallen into the hands of a bungling advocate.

It must also be remembered that he who argues against the doctrine of no-abstraction, does not argue merely against me and my work, but against Horne Tooke and the *Diversions of Purley*.

I have done nothing more than insist upon the doctrines therein contained, and have only carried them out to their legitimate conclusions, in their application to metaphysics, morality, and politics. And *that criticism* can only be worth attention

which shall be directed to prove that these conclusions do not *legitimately* flow from Horne Tooke's doctrine of no-abstraction.

The sensible reader will not quarrel with a good argument, either because it is awkwardly put, or because it is placed side by side with a bad one.

If, in my conversation, I have sometimes spoken in too loud a voice, I can only say, with Mirabeau : "Si j'ai dit *la vérité*, pourquoi ma véhémence en l'exprimant, diminueroit-elle de son prix ?"

The doctrines herein inculcated assume to be founded on truth and reason only, and cannot therefore be opposed by any mere opinion or authority. They are, I know, many of them directly opposed to public opinion—and will, therefore, doubtless be either scouted, or otherwise roughly handled, by those who worship at that altar, and who never condescend to kneel at that of common sense. But I console myself with the reflection, that this has been the fate of nearly all, *or all of the now great universally acknowledged truths*—when first promulgated. I have, however, neither a hope nor a wish to convince *others* by *my* arguments. I question whether any man was *ever* convinced by the arguments of another. All that a reasoner can do is to set his readers A-THINKING in the right direction. He gives them a clue—and then they either dress up his arguments in their own language, and please themselves with believing them to be their *own*—or else do really discover new arguments of their own on the same side by which they are convinced.

And there is a reason in nature for this. For the same natural law, which makes it offensive to a man to be beaten with a stick, makes it also offensive to be beaten with an argument. There is a distinction but no difference.

On this account it was that I set out with promising merely to offer food for thought.

I proffer a key wherewith men may, if they please, readily unlock the treasury of all human philosophy—if they will only take care to put the right end of the key into the key-hole.

But this key was not wrought and fashioned by me, but by Horne Tooke. I found it in the dust-hole, neglected and covered with rust, and in danger of being entirely forgotten. I



have brightened it with sand-paper, and filed up its wards anew, and endeavoured to make it play somewhat more easily in the lock.

I cannot do better, I think, than conclude this preface with an extract from A. B. Johnson.

“What constitutes personal identity? What enables you to know that you are the individual who, thirty years ago, arrived in this city? The usual answer to this question would be words, but the true answer is independent of all words. It is simply what you discover it to be. A dumb mute possesses on this subject all the knowledge which you possess,” (except its *name*) “and usually in much greater clearness and purity than you possess it; for with you, the answer is probably so confounded with words that the phenomena of nature (which constitute the real answer) are but little regarded.

“What are thoughts? What is memory? What is an idea? What are conscience and consciousness? They may severally answer: I am what I am. No answer is so good as this, because none is so little likely to mislead the inquirer. Would we know further what they are, we must resort to our experience, and in its mute revelation alone can we receive the answer. What is lightning? Should the clouds exhibit to me a flash, it would constitute the best answer that the question is susceptible of. Precisely thus, when I ask, what is memory? Should the *recollection* occur to me of a flash of lightning, *that recollection* would constitute the best answer which the question about memory is susceptible of.

“To experience the recollection of a flash of lightning will tell you only what the word memory names. You may say that you wish to know how memory is caused, and what constitutes its nature. Recur, then, again, to your consciousness. Experience all which you can in relation to memory, and receive the experience as the only answer which the questions admit. If experience will not answer the question, language cannot; for language possesses no signification in the premises, except what it derives from its reference to your experience.

“We can answer every question which inquires after anything that we can experience, either by our senses or our conscious-

ness; but a question which inquires after none of these is an inquiry after nothing. How would memory look if we could see it? How would it feel, taste, smell, or sound? Does it die, or continue to live in the soul after the death of the body? If it is a property of the soul, why does it decay in old men? If it is a property of matter, is it confined to a particular piece? Does it possess gender and number? We may form as many such questions as we can form syntactical sentences; but the questions are like a numerical sum whose figures refer to nothing. The figures may be multiplied, divided, added, and subtracted, according to the rules which figures obey; but if the figures possess no ulterior reference, their product will possess no ulterior signification. Our questions also may be subjected to all the rules of logic that are applicable to the words; but so long as the words possess no ulterior reference, the answers which may be elaborated from them will possess no ulterior signification."

I have just received from my publisher, an extract from an article entitled, "Grammar and Grammarians," published in the October number of the Gentleman's Magazine for 1840. I regret that my attention was not called to this article sooner, as, from the tenor of the extract before me, I am convinced that its author's view of language is in unison with my own, and that I might have derived from a perusal of the entire article, at an earlier period, many useful suggestions. "A learned language," most truly observes the acute writer, "is the medium commonly resorted to when men endeavour to convey to others (clearly as they hope) those obscure notions which themselves had mistaken for the illuminations of wisdom." As an instance of the truth of this, let any one translate into *pure English* the following sentences from Bushby's Essay on the Human Mind—rejecting all such words as are strictly Latin or Greek, and translating them literally into such purely English words as those foreign words directly and unmetaphorically represent. The exercise will infallibly prove to him the effect which the introduction of foreign words into our language has had in mystifying philosophy: "the mind acquires\* ideas\* first by *sensation*.\* Our senses\* being acted\* upon by external\* objects\* convey\* ideas\*

of those objects\* to the mind. Thus by sensation\* we acquire\* the ideas\* of solidity,\* figure,\* colours,\* sounds,\* and other qualities\* of matter.\*

Secondly,\* the mind acquires\* ideas\* by reflexion.\* Reflexion\* is the notice\* which the mind takes of its own operations,\* such as of thinking, doubting,\* believing, reasoning,\* knowing, willing. The mind being conscious\* of these operations,\* and reflecting\* on them is furnished by them with ideas\* which could not be obtained\* from external\* objects.\*

There are other ideas\* (such as those of existence,\* personal\* identity,\* time\*, number\*) which are not the immediate\* objects\* either of sensation\* or reflexion :\* though the senses\*, may furnish the first occasions\* on which they occur\* to the mind.”

All the words with stars over them are Latin or Greek.”

The author's observations on the word *thing* clearly show that, although the true meaning of that word had not occurred to him, his acute judgment made him perceive all the mystery and unintelligibility of many of its ordinary applications.

“The Latin *res*,” says this clever writer, “has the same meaning as the English *thing*; from the Latin has been formed (who can tell when?) the adjective *realis*—a word at which Cicero could not have been less shocked than Professor Stewart at the abomination *thing-ed*. But suppose that the introducers of the *real* philosophy (as it is called) into this country had presented it under genuine English names; our ancestors would have been required to stomach a *thing-al* philosophy—to imbibe the doctrine of *thing-alists*, relative to the *thing-ality* of things. Our docility revolts at a theory inculcated in such a nomenclature as this; and yet Locke, the most rational of modern philosophers, can talk, and talk with considerable complacency, of the reality of things—*realitas rerum*.”

And again: “Tooke has wounded the sensitive nerves of certain purists in taste by asserting that “*res*,” a *thing*, gives us “*reor*,” I am *thinged*; “*vereor*,” I am strongly *thinged*; adding an admonition to “remember that where we now say I think, the ancient expression was *methinketh*, that is, *mething-eth*, it *thing-eth* me.” *Thing* is, in the Anglo-Saxon, *thinc*, and such is still the vulgar pronunciation of the word.”



He has, however, attributed to Horne Tooke that which does not belong to him. The word *thinc* is nowhere mentioned in the *Diversions of Purley*—at least not in my edition (2nd edition, 4to, 1798). In Bosworth's *Anglo-Saxon Lexicon*, however, the word is given; and I believe I may myself claim the credit of having first reconciled the meanings of thing, thinc, and think, (all one word) with common sense.

I have been compelled from circumstances to introduce much matter into the preface which ought to have been inserted in the body of the last number of the work; and which will lose much of its force and application unless it be read *subsequently to the perusal* of the entire work—or at least so much of it as relates to language.

I have somewhere said that man can perform no operations but by means of his muscular organs. And even in the performance of these operations, the term “active” can only be applied to him in the same sense in which it is applied to a steam-engine or a ship under sail. Man is purely passive. He is an electro-nervous pile\* attached to a locomotive machine, the locomotive machine being set in action by the agency (*sui generis*) of the nervous pile, the pile itself being excited to activity by the agency (*sui generis*) of things external to itself—in the midst of which it is placed—and with *some* of which (*viz.* the other component parts of the animal machine) it is in connection and contact.

I had argued this subject somewhat at length, with a view to

\* “If the brain be an electric pile, constantly in action, it may be conceived to discharge itself at regular intervals, when the tension of the electricity developed reaches a point along the nerves which communicate with the heart, and thus to excite the pulsations of that organ. This idea is forcibly suggested by a view of that elegant apparatus, the dry pile of Deluc; in which the successive accumulations of electricity are carried off by a suspended ball, which is kept by the discharges in a state of regular pulsation for any length of time. We have witnessed the action of such a pile maintained in this way for whole years in the study of the above-named eminent philosopher. The same idea of the cause of the pulsation of the heart appears to have occurred to Dr. Arnott; and is mentioned in his useful and excellent work on Physics, to which, however, we are not indebted for the suggestion, it having occurred to us independently many years ago.”—*Note to page 343 of Herschel's Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy.*

show that the so-called voluntary actions may be readily accounted for, in every conceivable instance, by the doctrine of *counteracting causes or impressions*, and without the necessity of supposing the existence of any such incomprehensible and impossible abstraction as that called WILL.

If I hear a mad bull roaring behind me, that noise impels me forward. But if I see another mad bull approaching in my line of flight, this second cause counteracts the former—and these two causes combine to form a third, which impels me in a new line, at right angles with the former, that being the direction in which I shall keep at the greatest distance from both dangers, if I be on an open plain. But if I see a house, *that* becomes a new attractive cause, and my line of flight will diverge towards the house. It must not be forgotten, however, that, all this time, I am silently talking to myself, and thus causing things to thing me over again—in other words, I am devising means of escape—and my words, and the things which my words suggest to me, become also causes which will influence my line of flight.

Memory or remembered things, therefore, are amongst the causes which set the locomotive machine in motion, as well as present things.

I assert most positively that our muscles can remember. And this is what we really mean when we speak of acting from habit, or, mechanically.

If a man be walking in a crowded street, however intently he may be thinking and talking to himself, yet his voluntary muscles (as they are called) will move him (mechanically, as we say) this way and that, in order to avoid running against people. Deeply intent on his own thoughts, it is impossible to conceive that his will (if there were such a thing) should have leisure to direct both his thoughts, and his lips, and his legs, and his arms, and his tongue, *all at the same moment of time!*

There is a game at which children often play. One takes hold of one end of a pocket-handkerchief, and the other of the other. Then one says: “when I say, hold fast, leave go—and when I say, leave go, hold fast—LEAVE GO!!” On the utterance of these last words the child ought and desires, or wills, to “hold fast.” Yet in nine cases out of ten it will leave go—the

*voluntary* muscles which move the fingers will unclasp the handkerchief though the so-called *will* of the player *wills* them to hold fast. Here then is an instance in which the *voluntary* muscles act in direct *opposition to the will*! They act from memory.

I had argued all this, I say, at some length, but want of room has compelled me to omit it.

I must here say one word more on the subject of religious faith; for I am most anxious not to say anything which can be construed into hostility to religion, than which nothing can be further from my intention. Religion has nothing to do, and can have nothing to do, with the reasonings of human philosophy. It is a thing apart—and cannot be reduced to the rules of reasoning. Nor can it ever be made the subject of philosophical discussions without injury to itself. It is a mystery not explicable by human reason—and only demanding of us, not argument, but faith. And I think this a strong argument against the indiscriminate spread of education amongst the multitude. For where are infidels and sceptics of every kind found to be most rife? Is it amongst the uneducated poor? Oh! no. It is amongst scholars and philosophers, and readers and thinkers—amongst such men as Volney and Voltaire—Hume, Byron Shelley—Diderot, Gibbon, and Rousseau.

I have received a quantity of very silly observations, enclosed to me, but not written, by one who signs himself “A Scribbler.” They are not worthy of a well-grown school-boy; and betray great obtuseness, great want of reading, and a plentiful lack of both scientific and literary knowledge. The writer objects to me that a foreigner, from what I have said about sensation, would take the word “sensation” to signify a “rap of the knuckles.” I hope he *would*—for the word sensation *does* signify a “rap of the knuckles,” as, throughout my whole work, I have taken great pains to prove. The writer objects to me that I *have proved* exactly what the greater part of the work was written *on purpose to prove*! My readers will be satisfied with this *single specimen*. For it is sufficiently clear that the head which could produce *such criticism*, could *not* produce anything better. All *such critics* I refer for their answer, to Moliere’s *La Critique de l’Ecole des femmes*. But to any criticism, worth the name, I shall listen with respect, and (if I reply at all) reply with temper.



# NUCES PHILOSOPHICÆ.

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## CHAPTER I.

### IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT.

A.

Well B., there is a bitter frost without, and a blazing fire within. The lights are on the table, the slippers are on our feet, and our feet are on the fender. Now what shall we do to hold THE ENEMY in check? Shall we break his hour-glass with a chess-board, or try and talk him to sleep?

B.

Oh, let us talk. You were lamenting yesterday that the study of what is called Moral Philosophy is so little cultivated and understood by men generally, but is confined almost exclusively to *men of learning*. You made the same observation with regard to the study of the nature and constitution of man, remarking that the study of the former is indeed comprised within the study of the latter. You must attribute, therefore, a greater degree of importance to the study of the nature and constitution of man than is generally awarded to it.

A.

If your brother when he returned from the East had brought with him an animal of a species wholly unknown in England before, and had presented it to the committee of

management for the Zoological Gardens, what is the very first information they would have required at your brother's hands?

B.

I cannot tell.

A.

You cannot tell! Why they could not even feed the animal until they had learned from your brother the sort of food which was suited to its *nature*. Being a rare and valuable specimen of its species, they would necessarily be very anxious to provide judiciously for its health and welfare. But to enable them to do this, would it not be absolutely essential to acquaint themselves with the animal's nature—its habits—its instincts—its manner of feeding—its mode of lodging—in short its nature and constitution? Would it be possible otherwise to provide for its welfare?

B.

Certainly not. But you seem to forget that man has long forsaken the habits of nature.

A.

Indeed I have not. Man is living in an artificial condition, and this is precisely the circumstance which makes the parallel perfect. For when you have transplanted the animal from his natural haunt into the garden of the Zoological Society, you have done for it exactly what man has done for himself—that is, removed it from a natural to an artificial state of existence. And in this, its new state, it will do well enough, but only upon one sole condition, viz., that those who have the management and superintendence of its treatment, observe a strict regard to the nature of the animal—its natural wants and necessities.

For the same reasons, how is it possible to legislate judiciously and successfully for the temporal welfare of man, without closely studying and becoming intimately acquainted with his nature and moral constitution? How is it possible otherwise to understand what is good and what is evil with regard to his management—his treatment—his conduct—in a word, his government? How is it otherwise possible to understand what is suitable or unsuitable to his nature—to his natural necessities—

to the temper, constitution, and natural wants of his mind? To all men who interest themselves—that is, nearly the whole of the upper and middle classes—in matters of social, moral, and political government—in all which concerns the welfare of mankind—the study of the laws of human nature, or, if you like it better, the study of moral philosophy, is, of all studies, the most important.

B.

And the most difficult, uncertain, and unprofitable.

A.

If it have been hitherto unprofitable, it is because the study has not been prosecuted in the right manner. While the study of astronomy and chemistry was conducted in the same manner as the study of moral philosophy is conducted still, they also were uncertain and unprofitable studies. While, with regard to these sciences, men continued to mistake *opinion* for knowledge, nothing certainly could be more absurd and unprofitable. But as soon as philosophers discovered their error—as soon as they began to estimate opinion at no more than its true value—as soon as they determined to admit, with regard to those sciences, (more especially the latter) nothing as true but that which could be proved—as soon, in fact, as knowledge took the place of opinion, certainty also took the place of uncertainty, light of darkness, and utility of unprofitable labour.

B.

Still you cannot deny that it is a difficult study, and one, the results of which can only be opinion, and therefore uncertain.

A.

I deny both. Take chemical knowledge for an example. Wherein doth it consist?

B.

In a knowledge of the laws which govern the elements of matter.

A.

It does. And how is this knowledge obtained?

B.

By experiment and observation.



A.

Even so. That is to say the best chemist knows exactly what he sees, and nothing more. He observes that certain effects are uniformly produced under certain circumstances, and he says these effects are produced by a law of nature ; he gives that law a name, and in all his future operations he takes that law for his guide, and never fails to produce the effects which he desires. What would you say of him if he should endeavour to produce *certain* effects in *opposition* to this law, or in *contempt* of it? He would of course fail ; but would you attribute his failure to any uncertainty or difficulty inherent in the science of chemistry, or to his own error in the manner of prosecuting the study?

B.

Manifestly to his own error, and I think I might justly add, folly.

A.

Let moral philosophers study the laws to which man, in common with all other living beings, as well vegetable as animal, owes his general nature, so to speak, and also those other laws to which he owes his individual or characteristic and distinctive nature—let them, like the chemist, take these laws for their guide—and the science of moral government will become as certain as the science of chemistry, and the result of the study will be, not opinion, but knowledge. And it will be far less difficult. For the chemist requires a laboratory, and instruments, and furnaces, and machinery, and an almost infinite variety of substances upon which to experiment. The moral philosopher needs none of all these. All his experiments can be made upon himself. He has only to study his own nature—to watch the operations of his own mind. He who would solve a problem in algebra must first study the nature of numbers ; and he who would solve a problem in moral philosophy must first study the nature of man. The grand distinguishing attributes of the nature of man are the faculty of speech, and its result—the multiplication of ideas. And as he who would become master of the science of algebra must study not only the nature of numbers, but also first make himself thoroughly acquainted

with the nature and use of algebraical signs, and figures which represent numbers; so he who would become master of the science of moral philosophy must study not only the nature of ideas, but also the nature and use of those signs and figures of ideas, viz. words.

It seems to me that legislators and popular instructors have almost entirely overlooked this subject—the study of human nature—or else have avoided it as not relevant to the object in view. Thus hundreds of books have been written, and thousands of speeches spoken, without once stopping to enquire into the nature of that being towards whose welfare they are anxious to contribute. They have sought to benefit him without stopping to enquire what is calculated to do so, and what not.

Another reason why the study of moral philosophy has been so generally avoided as a science, is on account of the heaps of learned lumber with which it has been encumbered. Men are afraid to approach a study, the language of which is so loaded with learned, mysterious, and unintelligible terms. The writers on this subject have felt their own ignorance, and have sought to conceal it under the mask of erudition—to mystify those whom they could not instruct—and to inspire into the minds of men a notion of superiority, as understanding things which nobody else can understand. Thus men have acquired an idea that it is an exceedingly dry and uninteresting study. But it is only dry and uninteresting because it is not understood. For the same reason the study of mathematics has acquired the double character of being the driest of all possible studies, and also the most fascinating. Those who understand it have given it the one character, while it has only received the other from those who do *not* understand it. Why do all the world so much admire simplicity both of language and manners? Because simple language is easily understood; and we love simplicity of manners because we can easily understand the actuating motive of those whose manners are unaffected, but not of those whose manners are artificial. Any science, therefore, may be made interesting by treating it in such a manner as to make it readily understood, and by the use of language which is simple, and a phraseology unencumbered with useless learning.

The study of human nature, therefore, is one of the utmost possible importance. It is one, too, which all men *may* understand, and which every one *ought* to understand, if he would qualify himself to become a judge in those matters which concern the welfare of mankind.

## CHAPTER II.

### SOURCES OF IGNORANCE AND ERROR ON THE SUBJECT OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY.

#### B.

If the study of moral metaphysics be so important, easy, and interesting, how comes it to be so little understood even by those who profess to teach it?

#### A.

The ignorance and error, in which the subject is wrapt, have chiefly arisen from the ignorance and error which prevail with regard to the nature, the uses, and significations of words.

The earlier writers on language taught first that words are the signs of things, and afterwards that they are the signs of ideas; from which men have jumped to the conclusion that each separate word is the sign of a separate idea, which being a fallacy, has given birth to whole hosts of fallacious opinions—"has caused," as Horne Tooke says, "a metaphysical jargon, and a false morality." In the very infancy of language, it is indeed highly probable, that every single word was the sign of some single sensible object, and these words were sufficient for *the bare purpose of communicating ideas*. But as men multiplied—as the number of their *ideas* increased—as their wants became more numerous—as their intercourse with each other became more frequent—as their occupation became more



various, constant, and important, and consequently their time became more precious, it became necessary *not only that they should* be able to *communicate their ideas*, but that they should also be able to do so with *expedition and rapidity*. Necessity is the mother of invention. Accordingly, contrivances have been discovered whereby much time is saved in the communication of ideas. Words have been invented which are not themselves the signs of separate ideas, but of a vast number of ideas at one time; or, if you prefer it, words which are the signs of other words. Thus, in order to communicate the idea of a house, it would be sufficient to call it a thing consisting of bricks and mortar, and tiles, and timber, and floors, and stoves, and chimneys, and windows, and doors, &c. &c. But this would be exceedingly inconvenient, and would occupy far too much time. We therefore use the word HOUSE, and make that word HOUSE stand for all the ideas of the several things of which a house is composed; or, if you prefer it, the word HOUSE stands as the sign of all those words which a man must use in order to describe the several parts of which a house is composed. Thus, apart from the ideas of the several things composing a house—that is, apart from the ideas of bricks, and mortar, and windows, and roof, &c., we have, of course, no idea conveyed by this word house. When the word HOUSE was first invented it did not bring to us a single idea which we had not before. What would you say of a man who should talk, and argue, and quarrel about the idea of a house, as an idea existing in his mind distinct and apart from the ideas of the several matters and things which constitute a house? You would say unhesitatingly that the man had in his mind no such idea—that it was impossible—and that he was, in fact, disputing about a word, a mere sound, and not about an idea. For when the ideas of the bricks, and the mortar, and the wood-work, and the tiles, and the iron-work are removed from the mind, what has become of the idea of the house? Of course it also has vanished. So of the words beauty, charity, &c. Men have said, “Beauty is a word, and a word is the sign of an idea, and therefore, whenever I pronounce the word beauty, I must have somewhere or other in my mind an idea of beauty apart from matter, since beauty is certainly

not material. It is true I cannot find this idea, nor am I conscious that I possess it; still it must be there somewhere or other." And so they go on disputing and quarrelling about this *supposed* idea, which has, in fact, no existence. Thus, contrary to the natural order of things, instead of inventing words in order to distinguish the ideas which existed in their minds, they have invented ideas (or imaginary ideas) in order to fulfil a fancied obligation to attach a separate idea to every separate word. Taught to believe that words are singly the signs of ideas, men have argued that *therefore* the number of ideas and the number of words must be exactly the same.

### CHAPTER III.

WORDS WHICH BEAR ONLY AN ARBITRARY MEANING LOSE THEIR POWER OF COMMUNICATING IDEAS, AND THEREFORE STRICTLY SPEAKING CEASE TO BE WORDS, AND BECOME MERE "INSIGNIFICANT NOISES,"\* SERVING ONLY TO PROPAGATE ERROR AND CONFUSION.

#### A.

There are many words whose proper meanings are lost to the great mass of men. These words, however, still continue in use; but the true meanings being unknown, every man attaches to them arbitrary meanings of his own; or else (which happens by far the most frequently) uses them without any meaning at all. These words, therefore, have become mere empty sounds, and those who so use them do indeed only "gabble like things most brutish." They have lost their power of communicating ideas,

\* Locke.

and only serve to involve mankind in virulent and endless disputes; and constantly act as hindrances, instead of promoters of knowledge, virtue, and happiness.

Three men talking together, and each giving to his words an arbitrary meaning of his own—that is, using words as the signs of ideas existing in his own mind, which words do not excite the same ideas in the minds of the others—do in fact converse in three different languages, and can no more understand each other than could three natives of different quarters of the globe, each being ignorant of the other's language.

In order to show you the confusion and gross absurdity arising from the use of words which have not, in the mind of him who uses them, a fixed and clearly defined MEANING, I will give you an instance from the *Επεα πτεροεντα*. A Mr. Harris had published a work, called *Hermes*, on philosophical grammar. Perhaps no work that ever was published created a greater sensation in the learned world, or was more universally praised and admired by learned men, than this book of Mr. Harris. Dr. Lowth called it “the most beautiful and perfect example of analysis that has been exhibited since the days of Aristotle.” And Lord Monboddo (I believe it was) spoke of it thus: “the truly philosophical language of my worthy and learned friend Mr. Harris, the author of *Hermes*, a work that will be read and admired as long as there is any taste for philosophy and fine writing in Britain.” This Mr. Harris, notwithstanding these high encomiums, in speaking of that part of speech called the “conjunction,” is guilty of the following absurdities, and solely because he used the word “*conjunction*” without having in his mind any fixed, clear, or determinate meaning attached to it. “First, he defines a *word* to be a ‘*sound significant*.’ Then he defines *conjunctions* to be words (i. e. *sounds significant*) ‘*devoid of signification*.’ Afterwards he allows that they have—‘*a kind of signification*.’ But this kind of signification is—‘*obscure*’ (i. e. signification unknown): something I suppose (as Chillingworth couples them) like a *secret tradition* or *silent thunder*; for it amounts to the same thing as a *signification* which does *not signify*; an obscure or unknown signification being no signification at all. But, not content with



these inconsistencies, which to a less learned man would have been sufficient of all conscience, Mr. Harris goes farther, and adds, that they are a '*kind of middle beings*'—(he must mean between signification and no signification)—'*sharing the attributes of both*,—(i. e. of signification and no signification) and '*conduce to link them both*'—(i. e. signification and no signification) '*together.*' It would have helped us a little if Mr. Harris had here told us what that *middle state* is, between signification and no signification! What are the *attributes* of no signification! And how signification and no signification can be *linked* together! Thus, then, is the *conjunction* EXPLAINED by Mr. Harris :—

A sound significant devoid of signification—

Having at the same time a kind of *obscure* signification—

And yet having neither signification nor no signification—

But a *middle something* between signification and no signification

Sharing the attributes both of signification and no signification—

And linking signification and no signification together!

Is it not extraordinary that a man of unquestionable learning and great reading like Mr. Harris, did not know that he was writing nonsense? And it is still more extraordinary that such a man as Dr. Lowth should admire that nonsense, as "the most beautiful and perfect example of analysis since the days of Aristotle." Had there been in Mr. Harris's mind a clear and distinctly defined idea attached to the word conjunction, he could not by possibility have written such egregious stuff as this, and much more of the same kind which his book contains. If the philosophical writing and speaking of the present day were analysed as Horne Tooke analysed the language of Mr. Harris, how large a portion of it would cut as pitiful a figure as Mr. Harris's definition of a conjunction! "Nor hath this mischief stopped" (says Locke, in his chapter on the abuse of words) "in logical niceties or curious empty speculations; it hath invaded the concernments of human life and society; obscured and perplexed the material truths of law and divinity; brought confusion, disorder, and uncertainty into the affairs of mankind, and if not destroyed, yet in great measure rendered useless those two great rules, Religion and Justice. What has the greatest part of the

comments and disputes upon the laws of God and man served for, but to make the meaning more doubtful and perplex the sense? What has been the effect of those multiplied curious distinctions and acute niceties, but obscurity and uncertainty, leaving the words more unintelligible, and the reader more at a loss? How else comes it to pass that princes speaking or writing to their servants in their ordinary commands are easily understood; speaking to their people in their laws, are not so? And, as I remarked before, doth it not often happen, that a man of an ordinary capacity very well understands a text, or a law that he reads, till he consults an expositor, or goes to counsel; who, by that time he has done explaining them, makes the words signify either nothing at all, or what he pleases?

Whether any by interests of these professions have occasioned this, I will not here examine; but I leave it to be considered, whether it would not be well for mankind, whose concernment it is to know things as they are, and to do what they ought, and not to spend their lives in talking about them, or tossing words to and fro; whether it would not be well, I say, that the use of words were made plain and direct; and that language, which was given us for the improvement of knowledge, and bond of society, should not be employed to darken truth, and unsettle people's rights; to raise mists, and render unintelligible both morality and religion? Or that, at least, if this will happen, it should not be thought learning or knowledge to do so."

Let me tell you a little fable, which, if it be not related in the "Dialogues of the Dead," might very properly have been so.

Three shades were conversing together on the banks of the Phlegethon. One was the stately shade of an ancient Roman—one was the shade of a modern Italian—and the other a modern Englishman. The Englishman's shade was bitterly lamenting the decline of *virtue* amongst mankind. The Italian shade, who had been a miser, and thought no arts worth cultivation but the arts of getting money, observed that he thought *virtue* an exceedingly frivolous, insignificant, and useless thing, and that the sooner it declined altogether from any country the better. "Then, sir," said the Roman shade, "I must take leave to tell you that you are a most 'frivolous, insignificant, and useless'

fellow, and not fit company for the shades of MEN." And he turned away with an expression of supreme contempt upon his lips. "Sir," said the English shadow, "I agree with my friend the Roman. You ought to be hooted from the society of all good men." And the Englishman followed and rejoined the Roman.

"Yes," pursued the Roman shadow, "it is indeed matter of deep lamentation that virtue is now almost extinct in the world. But how can it be otherwise, since almost all the civilized world are ignobly lazing away their lives in profound peace, which can of course afford no opportunity for the practice of virtue." "You astonish me," said the English shade. "Surely a state of peace is infinitely more favourable to the practice of *virtue* than a state of warfare!" "You talk unintelligibly," said the Roman Umbra. How in the name of common sense can a man show his *virtue* if he have no enemies? You speak foolishly." "Perhaps I do," said the English shade, "but my folly is perfect wisdom when compared with yours." And thereupon they turned from each other in mutual disgust. Whenever these three shades met, they henceforth quarrelled so bitterly that they were at last taken before judge Minos, who, as soon as he understood the cause of dispute, turning to the Roman, said, "pray, sir, be good enough to inform the court what you mean by the word *virtue*." "Mean!" said the Roman, "what can I possibly mean, but *military valour*?" And he drew himself up to his full Roman height, and looked remarkably well satisfied with himself. "And pray, sir," addressing the Italian, "do *you* mean *military valour* when you use the word *virtue*?"

"No, truly," replied the Italian, "I hope I am not so ignorant. Of course the word means, "a taste for the fine arts. But I have no taste for anything but money, and therefore I consider virtue a very frivolous affair." "And you?" said the Judge, addressing the English shadow. "I mean, what I suppose everybody else means, excepting those two ridiculous ghosts. I mean the practice of all good actions, and the avoidance of all bad ones." "Gentlemen of the Bar," said judge Minos, who was an excellent philosopher, "observe the ill consequences resulting from the arbitrary use of words. The greatest part of



my time is taken up by settling virulent disputes, the whole of which would be in future avoided, if the right use of words were understood, and all arbitrary meanings abolished. If one of you, gentlemen, would take the trouble to write a dictionary of the most important words, attaching to each word its true and proper meaning, so that all might know it, and understand it alike, you would not only save me an infinite trouble, but render a most important service to the whole community of your fellow shadows, no less than to the cause of virtue itself."

B.

And this is what you propose to do?

A.

Something like it. For I look upon language as a dish of nuts, every word being a nut, and having a little bit of moral philosophy for its kernel. A word is the shell of the nut, and the meaning of the word its kernel. And as every shell contains its own proper kernel, so every word contains its own proper meaning. And as shells which contain no kernels are of no earthly use, save to amuse children, so words having no fixed signification, serve no other purpose than to amuse "children of a larger growth," unless it be to afford them matter of contention.

This being my opinion of words, it follows that we have only to crack these nuts, and the gross sum of all the kernels will give us the gross sum of all moral and political knowledge. But let me further illustrate, by another fable, the fact that words used in an arbitrary sense—words not having a fixed, universal, and determinate meaning not only *do*, but of necessity *must* produce error, confusion, and mischief.

What are words?

B.

Words are signs of ideas existing in the mind of him who uses them, and their use is to communicate those ideas to the minds of others.

A.

What is the difference between a spoken and a written word?

B.

None whatever. A written word is merely the sign of

a spoken one, and is only necessary when those with whom one would communicate are beyond the reach of hearing. But this is a distinction without a difference.

A.

Both written and spoken words then are signs invented for the communication of ideas.

B.

Assuredly.

A.

But I suppose, since the words "sign" and "signal" are synonymous, I may, if I prefer it, use the word "signal."

B.

Undoubtedly.

A.

Then I do prefer it. And now for the fable. You know that the admiral of a fleet communicates his orders to the captains of ships by means of signals—that is, by means of small flags of different colours. These flags are used because those to whom the admiral would communicate his ideas are beyond the reach of hearing, and because it would occupy too much time to send his orders by means of written letters. They serve, therefore, precisely the same ends which are the sole object of both written or spoken language. Well—a fleet of fifty-two ships was once sent to sea in search of the enemy, having on board an admiral and fifty-two captains. The admiral desired his secretary to make fifty-two fair copies of his book of signals, and deliver them out to the fifty-two captains. But this secretary was a traitor in the pay of the enemy, and instead of annexing to the signal flags in the captains' books the true meaning of each flag as it stood in the admiral's book, he annexed to each flag an arbitrary meaning of his own, differing from that which the admiral's book exhibited.

The enemy soon hove in sight. Up went the admiral's signal (a red flag) for "take close order," and down went the captains into their cabins to consult their dictionaries (I mean their signal books) for the meaning of a "red flag." Captain A's book informed him that it meant "take more sea-room," and captain A instructed his lieutenant accordingly; and the lieutenant

instructed the sub-lieutenant, and the sub-lieutenant instructed the midshipmen, and the midshipmen instructed the seamen, who caused the ship to "take more sea-room." But captain B's book told him that the red flag signified "prepare for action." So captain B instructed his lieutenant that the admiral by his red flag had ordered the fleet to prepare for action, and the lieutenant so instructed the inferior officers and seamen, who cleared the ship accordingly. Captain C on consulting his book, found that the red flag signified "make more sail." And captain C instructed his lieutenant, and his lieutenant the midshipmen, and the midshipmen the sailors, and the sailors "made more sail" accordingly.

Thus the captains themselves, all in error, propagated that error to the inferior officers, and they to the people—I beg pardon—I mean the crew. In the mean time all the other captains were equally active in obeying what, according to the arbitrary interpretation of his own particular book, each honestly believed to be the order of the admiral. All were wrong; but all thought themselves right, and all were equally active in propagating error among their inferior officers and crews. The captain of each vessel looked around him in astonishment at the unaccountable confusion into which the fleet was thrown. Every one of them might have been seen stamping, and swearing, and blustering, and blaming everybody but himself. Captain A wondered at, and reprobated the conduct of captains B, C, D; and captain B wondered at, and reprobated the conduct of captains A, C, D.

The admiral, enraged at what he conceived to be disobedience to his orders, sent up flag after flag—green, yellow, blue—but to no purpose. The confusion only became worse confounded. At last, overwhelmed with grief, shame, and deep mortification, and seeing that nothing could save the fleet from being taken or destroyed by the enemy, he threw himself into his gig, was rowed ashore in dead silence, from whence he hastened to bury himself in an obscure nook in the country under an assumed name. Every ship in the fleet became a prize to the enemy, and officers and men were carried prisoners into a foreign country. Here the officers did nothing but quarrel among themselves from morning



till night. For each was most positively certain that he himself was right, and very naturally attributed all the confusion and mischief which had arisen to the stupidity or treachery of the others. Seventeen duels were fought within the first three months, for all their signal books had been destroyed by the enemy, and so could not be referred to. The periodical publications of the time were filled with the most heterogeneous accounts of the failure of the expedition. The editor of one, being intimately acquainted with captain A, and knowing him to be man of great talent and courage, asserted that the action was lost through the stupidity of the captains, all of whom, excepting captain A, mistook the signals. Another, being the uncle of captain B, and knowing his nephew to be a talented man, and an excellent sailor, protested that the expedition had failed through the stupidity of all the captains except one, as was stated by his brother editor. But as to the particular individual, who alone understood and obeyed the signal, his brother editor was entirely mistaken. That individual was not captain A, but captain B. And hereupon a furious war was waged between the two brother editors. Each of the periodicals of the day differed from the others. But each was the oracle of a class, and by that class was implicitly believed. And this ignorance and error was propagated from individuals to classes, and from class to class. Years afterwards these periodicals became the reservoirs from which historians drew their opinions when they sat down to incorporate the failure of this expedition in the archives of the country. Each particular historian had his particular class of readers and admirers, and this ignorance and error, at first propagated from individuals to classes, and from class to class, became finally transmitted from generation to generation. Now I ask you what was the sole cause of all this mischief—this mass of human misery and human error?

B.

In this particular instance, manifestly the captains not having understood the meaning of the signals.

A.

Yes. It was not because each flag had not its own proper and definite meaning, but because this meaning was not the

meaning attached to it by those for whose instruction the flag was hoisted. The red flag stood as the sign of clear and well defined ideas in the admiral's mind, but did not stand as the sign of the *same* ideas in the minds of the captains, but an arbitrary meaning had been affixed to it by the treachery of the secretary. But, of course, it would have led to the same results had these arbitrary meanings been attached to the flags by the captains themselves. Hence it follows that words, or flags, which are precisely of the same nature and use as written words, and may very properly be called telegraphic words—words, I say, whose meanings are arbitrary, not universal, not fixed—words to which every man attaches a meaning peculiar to himself, or may do so if he pleases—are not only useless as instruments of knowledge, but inevitably produce perpetual misunderstandings, mischiefs of all sorts, and misery of every denomination.

B.

You mean to say that when once a word has been invented to signify a particular idea, or set of ideas, it must always continue to be used in that sense and no other.

A.

I do. Because if one man may depart from the original meaning, so may another, and another. And these will propagate their new meanings amongst those whom they instruct; as, for instance, their children and servants. And hence it will happen that those who have been instructed by A in the meaning of an important word, when they hear that word used by those who have learned its meaning from B, will not understand them. The same thing would happen which happened on board the fleet. Captain A instructed his lieutenant, and his lieutenant the midshipmen, and the midshipmen the sailors, in one meaning of the red flag; and captain B instructed his lieutenant, and his lieutenant the midshipmen, and the midshipmen the sailors, in another meaning. And as the admiral, who alone could have decided between them, had absconded, the inferior officers and the crew of captain A continued, as long as they lived, firmly to believe that the admiral's red signal flag meant "take more sea-room," and nothing else; while the officers and crew of captain B's ship continued equally firm in their faith that it

signified "prepare for action." Now, had the red flag been an audible sign instead of a visible one; had it been a spoken word, instead of a telegraphic word; and had one of captain A's sailors, in after life, met one of captain B's, and used that word as a good-humoured way of requesting the other to give him more room, it is probable that the other, understanding the word to mean, as he had been taught, "prepare for action," would have interpreted it into a challenge to fight, or a threat, and nothing loth, would have made an angry retort, or some insulting reply, and thus a real and serious quarrel would have taken place. After bruising each other heartily, it is probable that captain A's man would have assured the other that he did not intend to affront him. They might have finally discovered that the quarrel had originated in their having understood the meaning of the word differently. But then would have come the question: whose meaning was the true one? And here would have been fresh cause of quarrel. Each would have contended for the meaning in which he had been in the habit of hearing it used on board his own ship. Each would have confidently believed himself right, and would have wondered at the obstinacy of the other, yet both would have been wrong, since the admiral's red flag signified neither "take more sea-room," nor "prepare for action," but "take close order." Now, this sort of quarrel is what is constantly occurring, day by day, in social and public communities. Men are perpetually quarrelling about words, because, every man attaching to his words meanings of his own, and which meanings are not attached to the same words in the minds of others, they cannot possibly understand each other, and therefore each in his heart, and often with his tongue, accuses the other of duplicity and falsehood; or, at the least, of obstinate stupidity, and bull-headed wilfulness. "I was once," says Locke, "in a meeting of very learned and ingenious physicians, when by chance there arose a question, whether any liquor passed through the filaments of the nerves. The debate having been managed a good while, by variety of arguments on both sides, I (who had been used to suspect that the greatest part of disputes was more about the signification of words than a real difference in the conception of things) desired that, before they went any



further on in this dispute, they would first examine and establish amongst them, what the word liquor signified. They at first were a little surprised at the proposal; and had they been persons less ingenious, they might perhaps have taken it for a very frivolous or extravagant one: since there was no one there that thought not himself to understand very perfectly what the word liquor stood for; which I think too, none of the most perplexed names of substances. However, they were pleased to comply with my motion, and upon examination, found that the signification of that word was not so settled and certain as they had all imagined; but that each of them made it a sign of a different complex idea. This made them perceive that the main of their dispute was about the signification of that term; and that they differed very little in their opinions concerning some fluid and subtle matter passing through the conduits of the nerves; though it was not so easy to agree whether it was to be called liquor or no, a thing which, when each considered, he thought it not worth the contending about."

B.

And like the "learned and ingenious physicians" of Locke, you mean to insinuate that the political physicians of mankind would be found to agree much oftener than they do, if they would but, before they begin to argue, first settle the meaning of the principal terms to be used in the argument.

A.

Exactly. If the legislators of a country would but first settle among themselves, what is to be uniformly understood by such words as right, wrong, good, bad, better, justice, improvement, reform, honor, dishonor, law, principle, &c. &c., I think it is clear that much sound knowledge would take the place of much ridiculous opinion, that good argument would succeed to a mere noisy jargon, and confusion and much misery be superseded by good order, and an increase of human happiness. It would no longer happen as it does now, that the morality of one man is heinous in the eyes of another—that the "right" of to-day is the "wrong" of to-morrow—that what one man considers improvement, another believes to be deterioration—that justice often becomes injustice—honor, dishonor—principle, no principle at all—and law itself unlawful.

B.

I grant most readily that society is as full of confusion as the fleet in the fable; and that much, very much of this confusion, as well as a great deal of mischief, is the sole result of the different meanings which different men attach to important words. But the remedy?

A.

What would have been the only remedy capable of restoring the fleet to order, had there been time to adopt it, and which could also have prevented all the misery, misunderstandings, and errors which ensued?

B.

The rectification of the captains' signal books by that of the admiral. The abolition of all the arbitrary meanings introduced by the traitorous secretary, and the restoration of the true meaning to each flag, as it stood in the admiral's book. But before I proceed to question, as I certainly shall do, the possibility of applying this remedy to the words in common use by society at large, let me see if I thoroughly understand your parable of the fleet in all its parts. By the fleet of fifty-two ships I presume you mean, the fifty-two counties called England and Wales.

A.

I do.

B.

By the captains you would typify the ancient authors, especially those philosophical writers on the subject of language.

A.

Yes.

B.

By the inferior officers you indicate later writers and speakers, who have been misled by the elder philosophers, in the use of language, as the inferior officers were misled by the captains. And by the common seamen you mean the common people, whose notions and conduct are governed by the instructions they receive from their superiors. By the individual ships with their officers and crews, you intend the individual factions into which society is divided; and by the confusion into which

the fleet was thrown by the attachment of wrong and different meanings to the signal flags by the officers of each ship, you signify the political and moral confusion produced by the attachment of arbitrary meanings to important words by the leaders of each faction. So far so good. But who is the traitorous secretary?

A.

Time. Time is the traitorous secretary, who, if he have not altered the meanings of words, has so altered the words themselves, that they can no longer be recognised without the most careful and minute examination; and thus it has happened that, for want of time to examine, men have been content to guess both at the word and its meaning, and, as usual with all guessing, they have generally guessed wrong. At all events, different men have guessed differently.

B.

Still I think your parallel will not hold entirely good. The confusion on board the fleet arose from actual disobedience to positive orders. True this disobedience was unintentional, but it was nevertheless disobedience. But is it possible for any man so completely to misunderstand an act of parliament as to act unintentionally in direct opposition to it?

A.

Are there no laws but acts of parliament? Are there not certain kinds of conduct which no acts of parliament can influence? Are there not the laws of honor? The laws of just dealing? The laws of integrity and good principle? Is there not a general though tacit law which commands us to do *right*? To do no *wrong*? To encourage and forward all *improvements*? To reform *abuses*? To act *honorably* towards each other? Are there not these and many others? But how are all men to do *right*, if all men understand the term in different senses? How are all men to act honorably, if that which is honorable in the mind of one man is dishonorable in the mind of another? How is a man to know whether or not he be a man of "principle," if no one understand the meaning of the word, or, which is the same thing, if all men attach to the word "principle" different significations? See you not, too, what a



cloak this loose and unsettled condition of language affords to every kind of bad action? A man performs a certain action. The only proof that can be brought to show that it is bad, is *opinion*—the opinion of others. But precisely the same proof can be brought to show that it is good, viz. opinion—the opinion of himself. Thus, nothing can be proved to be either good or bad, excepting only that which is contrary to some written law. But there are numberless actions, both good and bad, which do not come within the meaning of any written law whatever. Hence arise false doctrines, heresies, and schisms—hence the variety of contending opinions on moral and political subjects—and these must necessarily continue to arise so long as men continue to use words in senses which do not belong to them—senses which are arbitrary—senses which result solely from the opinions of individuals—senses which are not fixed and universal, and which are therefore as various and numerous as the individuals who use them, and which change their meanings as the chameleon changes its colour, with every change of circumstance.

B.

But stop a little. I said that a reference to the admiral's book, had there been time, would have restored the fleet to order. But you remember that soon after the commencement of the uproar, the admiral was reported missing, and I presume took his book with him. After this, I do not see how it was possible to rectify the disorder.

A.

On that particular occasion it was impossible; for the admiral *did* fortunately take his book with him, and so saved it from destruction by the enemy. But it is not lost—only missing.

B.

When the officers and crew returned from foreign imprisonment, they of course immediately sought out the admiral, and so at once put an end to all their disputes.

A.

Of course they did no such thing. They might have done so; but some were afraid to look him in the face, from an

ill-defined fear which would sometimes force itself upon them, that, after all, perhaps, it was just possible that the admiral might prove them, somehow or other, to be wrong. So they preferred retaining their old notions, at the hazard of their being erroneous. For it is painful to part even with an error which has been long cherished and obstinately defended. Man's self-love, too, suffers a fancied humiliation in having it proved that his swan is but a goose after all. Others really believed the admiral dead, and his book irrecoverably lost. Others again were too lazy and indifferent about the whole matter to take the trouble to look for him. A few found it to be to their *interest* that the subject should still continue involved in doubt and mystery. But by far the greatest number were so perfectly satisfied and confident, each that his own opinion was the true one, that they thought it wholly superfluous, and a mere loss of time, to go in search of the admiral's book.

B.

I am not quite sure that I understand what you mean by the admiral's book. Do you mean that in language there is any *standard* by which the meanings of words can be regulated and established universally, and so all confusion and misapprehension avoided?

A.

Most certainly I do—a standard by which all men, not only OUGHT to regulate the meanings of the words they use, but by which they MUST regulate them, or else MUST pay the penalty of that confusion, discord, mismanagement, and jarring interests, which we see everywhere pervading the great family of mankind; just as certainly as confusion, mismanagement, and failure, must be the lot of any fleet where the signals used to regulate the conduct of the ships are not understood by those who use them, or by those for whose information they are exhibited. In either case it is not a matter of doubt—but a matter of absolute and inevitable necessity.

B.

On board a fleet I grant this to be true. But are you quite sure that the cases run perfectly parallel? Is there really no difference between words and signal flags?

A.  
I confess I know of none. For is not a flag a signal ?  
B.

Yes.

A.  
A signal of what ?

B.  
Of ideas present in the mind of him who uses it. And he uses it for the purpose of communicating those ideas to the minds of others, and for no other purpose.

A.  
And what else are words than signals of ideas present in the mind of him who uses them ? And what other purpose do they answer than that of communicating those ideas to the minds of others ? Absolutely none.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CONNEXION EXISTING BETWEEN WORDS AND THE THINGS WHICH THEY SIGNIFY.

B.  
Now, then, where shall we find the admiral's book ?

A.  
If the signal-flags used on board a fleet, instead of being of different colours, were all white, and had their several meanings inscribed upon them, each upon each, in large characters, so that the officers of all the fleet could read them at almost any distance, would not that render an admiral's book unnecessary ?

B.  
Certainly, if such a plan were practicable, *all* signal books would then be unnecessary. Even the crews of the ships would



then understand the meaning of the signals without applying to their officers for instructions, and thus running the risk of being instructed in an error. This indeed would be an admirable plan. There could then be no error—no mistake. And even if one man, being a little near-sighted, *should* mistake the inscription on any one flag, he could instantly be set right by another man, or by using a telescope. But you cannot mean that *the meanings of words are inscribed on the words themselves!*

A.

But indeed I do. That is precisely my meaning. I mean that the word and its meaning are *naturally*, and *necessarily*, not *arbitrarily*, so associated in the mind, that whenever the word is pronounced, it instantly excites in the mind the idea or ideas of which that word is the signal. I say that this *association* in the mind is the *reason* of that word having been *made the sign* of that or those *ideas*, and no other. I say that every word carries with it its own meaning, and that if it do not, it has *no meaning at all*. I say that the meaning of a word is not and cannot be arbitrary, but is inherent and intrinsic—that the word and its meaning are inseparable—that the meaning of a word belongs to it as a part of itself—that the word is given to the meaning and not the meaning to the word—that they are to each other in the relation of cause and effect, and the meaning is the cause of the word, and not the word the cause of the meaning—that there is, therefore, a natural relation between the sign and the thing signified, from which the word results—and that this natural relation is indestructible so long as the word remains a word, for as soon as that relation is destroyed, there is no longer any *reason* why a particular word should be made the sign of any one idea or set of ideas more than another, unless indeed it be universal consent, which can only be obtained with regard to the very commonest sensible objects—and, there being now no longer any reason why that particular word should represent any one particular idea, or set of ideas, more than another, it will soon be made the sign of fifty different ideas by fifty different people—and as soon as this happens, it ceases to be a word, having lost the great attribute of words, viz. the power of communicating ideas, and becomes a mere empty and senseless

sound, meaning anything which he who uses it may choose to attach to it, and, therefore, meaning nothing at all to others, since it is manifest that a word which may mean anything, does, in reality, mean nothing.

“Words may undoubtedly at sometimes, and by some persons, be so abused; and too frequently they are so abused. And when any word or termination becomes generally so abused, it becomes useless; and, in fact, ceases to be a word; for that is not a word whose signification is unknown.”—*Horne Tooke*. And again: “He that puts not constantly the same sign for the same idea, but uses the same word sometimes in one, and sometimes in another, signification, ought to pass in the schools and conversation for as fair a man, as he does in the market and exchange, who sells several things under the same name.”—*Locke*. In short, I say that the meaning of every word is inscribed upon the word itself, and is a definition of the thing signified. I do not mean such a definition as would satisfy a mathematician, but one sufficiently characteristic to direct the mind of the hearer to the objects intended.

#### B.

Illustrate—illustrate. Illustrations are “the windows which let in the best light.”

#### A.

As a familiar instance, take the word steam-vessel. Is not the meaning stamped upon the word? It not the word itself a definition? Destroy the relation which here manifestly exists between the sign and the thing signified—and which relation was the *cause* of the imposition of the name—lose sight entirely of the idea of *steam* involved in the word over and above the ideas which it more immediately represents—and the word might be, and would be, applied to one kind of vessel as well as another, and with just as much propriety, that is, no propriety at all. And being applied to signify *any* vessel, it would signify *no one* in particular, and so become absolutely useless, we having already general terms to signify water-vehicles. But the term *steam-vessel* is the sign of a multitude of ideas—of all those ideas which represent the several parts which go to the composition of a steam-vessel—whereof *steam* is *one essential* part.

And it is this *one essential* part which first caused the imposition of *that name* on *that object*, and which gives it its propriety, and which forms the indestructible connexion between the sign or name, and the thing signified or named. Again: the words hiss, crackle, snap, bubble, tinkle, squeak, roar. So again the Greek word *gugu*, the Italian *gorgoliare*, and the English *guggle*. You may, in your own mind, attach to each of these three words what meaning you please, but if you would be *understood*, you must use them to represent that peculiar noise made by a liquid as it issues by gushes from a narrow-necked bottle. If these words do not mean *this* they mean nothing.

B.

But these words are merely imitations of natural sounds by the human voice.

A.

That is true. Still they serve to show the manner in which the names of things arise out of the things themselves—the *custom* of determining the name by some relation existing between the thing signified and the sign used to represent it, and to show that there exists a *reason* why a particular word should be used to signify one particular thing, and no other. If they do *not prove*, they at least *help to prove*, the truth of Horne Tooke's assertion, that "there is nothing *strictly arbitrary* in language."

But let us try another class of words. For instance:

Yellow-hammer

Red-breast

Black-cap

Black-bird

Puet

Cuckoo

So named from Peculiarity of color

Peculiarity of note

B.

But all these words, except the two last, and also your word *steam-vessel*, are not single words, but, in fact, they are each of them two words.

A.

I see not how that alters the case, for custom and the hyphen



have made each of these two words, one. And had each of the former words ended with a vowel, and each of the latter begun with a vowel, it is probable that the former and the latter, would have been so blended together as to be, at first sight, no longer distinguishable. But if you object to these double words, let us select some others. Take, for instance, the words *neighbour*, *acorn*, *island*, *bridal*, *ballast*, are these double words?

B.

No—and, therefore, although I perfectly well understand the meaning of them, yet I confess I cannot see their meaning *inscribed* upon them.

A.

I perceive you are not very deeply read in the writers on etymology, and indeed there are but few worth the reading. If you were, what need of this conversation? But there are thousands and tens of thousands of highly intelligent persons in the empire, who, like yourself, have been too early impelled by necessity to go out into the world in search of the means of living, and have since been too constantly occupied with the more pressing concerns of business, to find time to go a-fishing in the muddy waters of etymological learning; and that too with the very probable chance of catching scarcely a fish a-week, and that one fish, perhaps, but a tittle-bat. And yet I assert that a knowledge of the nature of language is absolutely and imperatively necessary to a knowledge of the nature of things. “I very early found it, or thought I found it,” says Horne Tooke, “*impossible* to make many steps in the search after *truth*, and the nature of the human understanding, of *good* and *evil*, of *right* and *wrong*, without well considering the *nature of language*, which appeared to me to be *inseparably* connected with them.” And “the consideration of ideas and words,” says Locke, “as the great instrument of knowledge, makes no despicable part of their contemplation, who would take a view of human knowledge in the whole extent of it.”

“And lastly,” says Lord Bacon, “let us consider the *false appearances* that are imposed upon us by *words*, which are framed and applied according to the conceit and capacities of the vulgar sort: and although we think we govern our words,

and prescribe it well, *loquendum ut vulgus, sendiendum ut sapientes*; yet certain it is, that words, as a Tartar's bow, do shoot back upon the understanding of the wisest, and mightily *entangle and pervert the judgment*. So that it is almost necessary in all controversies and disputations to imitate the wisdom of the mathematicians, in setting down in the very beginning the definition of our words and terms, that others may know how we accept and understand them, and whether they concur with us or no. For it cometh to pass, for want of this, that we are sure to end there where we ought to have begun, which is in questions and differences about words." And again: Bishop Wilkins says, "this design will likewise contribute much to the clearing of some of our modern differences in religion;" (and he might have added, *in all other disputable subjects, especially in matters of law and civil government*)—"by unmasking many wild errors, that shelter under the disguise of affected phrases; which, being philosophically unfolded, and rendered according to the genuine and natural importance of words, will appear to be inconsistencies and contradictions. And several of those pretended mysterious, profound notions, expressed in great swelling words, whereby some men set up for reputation, being this way examined, will appear to be either nonsense, or very flat and jejune. And though it should be of no other use but this, yet were it in these days well worth a man's pains and study, considering the *common mischief that is done, and the many impostures and cheats that are put upon men, under the disguise of affected insignificant phrases*."

And again: "I undertook this," says Horne Tooke, "because it afforded a very striking instance of the importance of the *meaning of words*, not only (as has been too lightly supposed) to metaphysicians and schoolmen, but to the rights and happiness of mankind in their dearest concerns—the decisions of courts of justice." And again: "language, it is true, is an art, and a glorious one, whose influence extends *over all others*, and in which, finally, *all science whatever must centre*." Yet, notwithstanding this great importance of a clear knowledge of the use and nature of language, I am certain I speak the truth when I say, that there is not one man in a thousand, no,

nor in ten thousand, who understands his mother-tongue. But this ignorance does not arise because any great learning is required in order to enable a man to understand it; for, says Horne Tooke in another part of his work, the *Επεα πτεροεντα*, “a man of plain common sense may obtain it, if he will dig for it; but I cannot think that what is commonly called *learning* is the mine in which it will be found. Truth, in my opinion, has been improperly imagined at the *bottom of a well*: it lies much *nearer to the surface*; though buried indeed at present under mountains of learned rubbish; in which there is nothing to admire but the amazing strength of those giants of literature who have been able thus to heap Pelion on Ossa.” Now, I think it is these same “mountains of learned rubbish” which have *concealed* this important branch of knowledge from the general reader, frightened him from all attempts to acquire it, and hindered him from seeing its vast importance, necessity, and intimate connexion with all the nearest and dearest concerns of humanity.

It is the fashion, too, notwithstanding the authority of the great men just mentioned, Locke, Bacon, Wilkins, Horne Tooke, to decry that species of knowledge which deals in words. “Out upon words,” say these wiseacres, “give us THINGS!” And having said this, with all the pomp of self-satisfied decision, they fancy they have choked you with an unanswerable argument. In the words of my text, they do but “gabble like things most brutish.” For they might just as sensibly rail at the farmer for growing corn. Just as sensibly they might exclaim, “out upon corn! Give us BREAD!” For it is just as easy to have bread without corn, as a knowledge of *things*, without a knowledge of words. These men might safely be left in the undisturbed possession of their own wise notions—for these are not the sort of men to destroy the Capital by setting the Thames on fire—but the constant reiteration of this silly doctrine produces the mischief of making those, who are not habituated to think for themselves, believe there is really something in it, besides “mere jargon and insignificant noise.”

But “let us return to our sheep.” The words which I last mentioned are not, as you suppose, single words; but every one



of them is, like the others you objected to, a *double* word. You say that you cannot see that the meaning of these words are *inscribed* upon them. But that is only because Time, the traitorous secretary, has so blotted and blurred the inscription, that it is necessary to put on the spectacles of etymology in order to decypher it. And, by the way, this same etymology is what I meant by the admiral's signal-book.

*Neighbour*—consists of two words: *neah*, (near) in the Friesic dialect *nei*, and the Anglo-Saxon word *bur* (a dwelling)—*a near dwelling*. This word *bur* is also the parent of our word *bower*—*a lady's bower* or dwelling.

*Acorn*—is *aac* or *ac* (an oak) and *corn* (fruit, produce)—that is, *the fruit or produce of the oak*.

*Island*—antiently written *ealand*, *ealond*, *igland*, *iglond*, and, in low Dutch and German, *eiland*—is compounded of the Anglo-Saxon words *ea* (water) and *land*; and signifies water-land, land in water, or surrounded by water.

*Bridal*—antiently written *bryd-eala*, is made up of the Anglo-Saxon *bryd* (a bride) and *eala*, (ale) and signifies *bride's ale*, *bride's feast*, or *marriage festival*.

*Ballast*—is also made up of two Anglo-Saxon words. *Hlæst*—in low Dutch, German, Danish, and Swedish, *last*, signifies a *burthen* or *loading*; and *bat* signifies a boat—*bat-last*—or *boat-burthen*—a weight or burthen put into a boat to keep it steady in the water. For euphony's sake, the *T* is dropt and the *L* doubled, making one word *ballast*. From this word *hlæst* (the diphthong pronounced broad, like *a* in father) comes our word *last*—*a last of corn*—that is, a certain measure or *burthen* of corn. Does not each of these words carry with it its own meaning?

B.

Yes—but each of these, though I knew it not, turns out to be a double word. I should like to hear some examples of the same kind in *single* words. You have instanced the double word *yellow-hammer*, which is, I believe, the name of a bird with yellow plumage. But what is the meaning of the word *yellow* singly. Has this word also its meaning inscribed upon it?

## A.

It has. As the word *brown* means *burnt*, so the word *yellow* means *ignited, kindled, lighted up*. "*Brown* as well as *brand*," says Horne Tooke, "are the past participle of the verb *to bren*, or *to brin*, that is, *to burn*. The French and Italians have in their languages this same participle, written by them *brun* and *bruno*. *Brown* means *burned*. It is that colour which things have which have been *burned*."

Just before the cook takes up her joint of roasted meat from the fire, she moves it closer to it for a few minutes. If you ask her why she does this, she will tell you that she does so in order "*to brown it*"—that is, *to burn it*—to give it a *burnt* color—the color "*which things have which have been burned*." The difference of sound between *burn* and *brown* is of no weight whatever. Our ancestors had nothing to guide them in their pronunciation but the *ear*. It is not at all singular, therefore, that different men should pronounce differently the same word, especially when it is remembered that there are certain letters and combinations of letters which some men cannot articulate. Thus, certain persons cannot articulate the letter *r*, but for *row* always say *wow*—for *rogue*, *wogue*, &c. And some cannot pronounce our *ngth*, but for *strength* say *strenth*. Others cannot pronounce the *shr*, but for *shrew* say *srew*. Others cannot pronounce the *m* before *b*, but for *dumb* say *dub*. This gave rise to the frequent *transposition* of letters, and they sometimes said *forst*, and sometimes *frost*—sometimes *gærs* (the diphthong pronounced *broad* like *a* in *father*) and sometimes *grass*. And it must be further recollected that, as the common people had no other guide to their pronunciation than the *ear*, so neither had those who *wrote* any other guide to their *spelling*. They *spelled* words as they heard them pronounced, and as they were *pronounced* differently, so also were they necessarily *spelled* differently. There were no spelling-books in those days. For the same reason the harsh, guttural, Anglo-Saxon *g* was frequently softened to the sound of our *y*; and the vowels were used almost indifferently one for another. I am speaking more particularly of that period during which the language was gradually undergoing a transition from Anglo-Saxon to our

present English, and when it had already been corrupted by an infusion of Danish, and other northern dialects, as well as Norman French, from its original Anglo-Saxon purity. At the present day, if we had no other guide for our orthography but the *ear*, the common people of London (and our far-off ancestors were all common people in matters of literature) would write *en* for *hen*, and *hegg* for *egg*—*wast* for *vast*, and *von* for *won*. And in the same manner certain consonants were *mutually interchanged* by our forefathers, as F, B, P, and V—T and D, &c. &c. And this must ever be the case, more and less, in the infancy of all languages, for there is an “anatomical reason for it”—all men’s organs of speech are not formed precisely alike, any more than their other organs, or their features, and this is the reason why some persons have great difficulty in articulating a sound, which to others is easy enough; but in polished societies, where pronunciation is, in great measure, regulated by orthography, this difficulty is overcome by constant *practice* on the part of those who experience it.

The Anglo-Saxon words signifying *to burn*, were *bærnan*, *byrnan*, and the Low German, *brennen*—Dutch, *branden*, *burnen*—Francic, *brinnan*—Danish, *brände*. It will not surprise you, therefore, considering what I have just said, that our phrase *to burn*, during the age of transition, and after the prefix *to* had been substituted for the infinitive termination *an* in order to mark the infinitive mood, should have been written indifferently *to bren*, *to brin*, *to brand*, *to bourne*. And that our substantive, *a burn*, should have been written sometimes *byrne*, *bryne*, and BROUNE—that our participle *burned* should be sometimes written *burne*—our word *burnt*, BRONT—and our adjective *brown*, BRUN (pronounced *brook*.)

“Newe grene chese of smalle clammynes comfortethe a hotte stomake, as Rasis sayth, it repressethe his BROUNES (burns or burnings) and heate.”—*Regiment of Helthe*.

“It BOURNETH over moche.”—*Regiment of Helthe*.

“In our word *brandy*, (German, *brandwein*, *burnt wine*) *brand* is the same participle, and signifies *burned*”—*brandy* being a liquor produced by the agency of fire in distillation.

“All colors in all languages,” says the author I have just



quoted, "must have their denomination from some common object, or from some circumstances which produce those colors. So Vossius well derives the Latin *fuscus* (brown) from the Greek *phoskein*, which Hippocrates uses in the sense of *ustulare* (to burn); for things which are burnt become *brown*." In like manner—

*Yellow*—*gealged* (the *g* softened into *y*, and the diphthong pronounced broad, like *a* in *father*, *yealged*,) is the past participle of *ge-alan*, to *light up*—to *kindle* into a flame. So the Latin word *flavus*, (yellow) and *flammeus*, (flame-colored or yellow) are nothing more than the Greek *phlegma*, (a flame) which, in its turn, comes from *phlego*, (to burn.) As our *brown* therefore means *burnt*, so our *yellow* signifies literally, *kindled*—figuratively, *flame-colored*.

*Book*—Anglo-Saxon, *BOC*—Low German, *BOOK*—Friesic and Dutch, *Boek*—German, *Buch*—Moesogothic, Swedish, and Icelandic, *Bok*—Danish, *Bog*—signifies a *beech tree*, the books of the northern nations having been made of thin pieces of wood cut from that species of tree. Thus also the Latin word *liber* (a book) signified the *inner bark of a tree*, that being the material of which the Latins originally made *their* books. So again the Greek *biblos* (a book) signified an Egyptian plant, (the cyperus papyrus of Linnæus) which, when divided into laminæ and formed into sheets to write upon, was called *papuros*, hence *papyrus*—and hence also our word *paper*.

*Shoulder*—Anglo-Saxon, *sculder*, from the Icelandic *skiolldr*, (a shield); and that again from *skiol*, (a refuge, a defence) the *shoulder* being that part of the body across which the *shield* was slung. The *shoulder*, therefore, means the *shielder* or *shield-carrier*.

*Collar*—is the Anglo-Saxon *ceolr* (the *c* pronounced like *k*), and signifies the *throat*. Hence also the Latin *collum*, (neck).

*Finger*—is the Anglo-Saxon *feng*, (took) the past tense of *fon*, (to take). The *er* is added to signify *agency*, and thus the word *finger* very appropriately signifies *taker*.

*Mouth*—is the third person singular, indicative of the Moeso-

gothic *matjan*, Anglo-Saxon, *metian*, (to feed), and signifies *that which feedeth* the body.

*Tooth*—Moesogothic, *taujið*, the third person singular indicative of *taujan*, Anglo-Saxon, *teogan*, (to tug), signifies *that which tuggeth*.

*Lid*—The past participle of *hlidan*, (to cover), signifies *covered*—*that by which anything is covered*.

*Street*—Low German, *strat*, *strate*—Dutch, *straat*—Friesic, *strete*—German, *strasse*—Danish, *stræde*—Swedish, *stråt*—Icelandic, *stræti*—Breton, *streat*, *stread*—Welsh, *ystrad*, *ystryd*—Irish and Gaelic, *sraid*, *sraide*—French, *estrade*—Italian, *strada*—Spanish, Portuguese, *estrada*. All these are past participles of verbs cognate with *stredan*, (to strew). So in Latin, *strata viarum*, (streets), that is, those particular kinds of ways which are *strata* (strewed) with stones or gravel. *Street* therefore signifies a way which is *strewed* with stones, gravel, or other matters.

*Glass*—Anglo-Saxon, *glas* (glass, æ pronounced broad). Glas, glis, gliz, were used in the middle age for *to glitter*. Glass, therefore, as well as the old German word, *glas*, (amber) means *that which glitters*.

*Smith*—the third person singular indicative of *smitan*, (to smite), *ic smite*, (I smite), *thu smitest*, (thou smitest), *he smiteth*, *smit*, or *smith*, (he smiteth)—A *smith*, therefore, is one who *smiteth*.

*Wine*—as *brandy* signifies a liquor obtained by the agency of fire, so *wine* signifies a liquor obtained by fermentation. Wine—Low German, *wien*—Dutch, *wyn*—German, *wein*—Old German, *uwin*—Moesogothic, *wein*—Danish, *viin*—Swedish, *win*—Icelandic, *vin*—Welsh, Breton, *gwin*—Irish and Gaelic, *fion*—French, *vin*—Italian and Spanish, *vino*—Portuguese, *vinho*—Slavonic, *wino*—Greek, *oinos* (probably pronounced *woinos*)—Persian, *win*—Latin, *vinum*—are all the offspring of one common stock—*yayin*, from the Hebrew obsolete verb *yaayan*, (to ferment) and signify a liquor obtained by *fermenting* the juice of grapes.

Dr. Bosworth gives *yayin*, (wine), the *expressed* juice of the

grape; from *yanah* (*to press, to squeeze*). But Professor Hurwitz, of the London University, an accomplished Hebrew scholar, does not think that *yayin* is at all allied to *yanah*, but that it has for its root the obsolete verb *yayan*, (*to ferment*).

Is not the meaning of every one of these words inherent in the word itself?—inscribed, as it were, upon it? Is there not a *reason* why each particular word was applied to each particular object?

### B.

But the meanings of these words are perfectly understood by every one, although it is certain that not one man in ten thousand, who uses them and hears them, is able to read the inscription upon them—that is, who understands their etymology—or sees or knows anything of the connexion which you have certainly shown to exist between the words and their meanings.

### A.

Nor is it necessary with regard to such words as these. The names of objects which are daily falling under the notice of all, and which names they are daily hearing pronounced and applied to designate those objects, are established by universal consent, and kept in the memory by constant use. And if the meanings of *all* words were so established, and so understood universally, the absurdities of which I complain could never have existed. But *at present* I am only *illustrating a principle*—I shall *apply* that principle *hereafter* to words of greater importance, and whose meanings are *not* understood, although the words themselves are in universal and daily use. My object at present is to show that there is *no word*, in *any language*, which has not a clear and definite meaning *belonging to it*—and that when it ceases to express this, its proper meaning, it ceases to have *any meaning at all*—except, as I have once before excepted, the names of such common objects as have been established by universal consent—but that even these have a meaning inherent in them which was the cause of their imposition—the cause of their having been selected to designate the things of which they are the signs.

### B.

Hitherto you have only shown how one word has arisen out of



another—how, for instance, our word *brown* has arisen out of the old word signifying *to burn*—and you have shown the connexion which there is between the color which we call *brown* and the *action* which we call *burning*—the color *brown*, being the effect of the action *burning*. But whence comes the *original* word *burn*? Whence come those *primitive* words, out of which all the others have arisen?

## A.

If the primitive words in all the languages in the world were collected, their number would be found to be extremely inconsiderable, and merely the names of the commonest sensible objects. Yet even upon these, I have no doubt that the meanings also were originally inscribed. But of this I can offer you no other proof than that which is proffered by analogy. I have instanced several words, and I mean to instance many more, in order to show you that, in the formation of these words at least, there was nothing arbitrary. And I think, if a *reason* can be given for the formation and application of *ninety-nine words*, it is only fair to conclude that a reason *does also exist* for the formation and application of *the hundredth*, if we only knew where to find it.

“La preuve connue d’un grand nombre de mots d’une espece, doit etablir un precept generale sur les autres mots de même espece, à l’origine des quels on ne peut plus remonter. On doit en bonne logique juger des choses que l’on ne peut connoitre, par celles de même espece qui sont bien connues; en les rame-nant à un principe dont l’evidence se fait appercevoir par tout ou la vue peut s’étendre.”—*M. de Bosses*.

## B.

But if the formation and application of particular names to particular things be not arbitrary, would it not necessarily follow that all languages would be alike?

## A.

No. Locke said so, but Locke did not understand the philosophy of language. If he *had* understood it he would not have written *much* that he *has* written. He would not have sought in the *composition of ideas*, that which can only be found in the *composition of words*. Had Horne Tooke written before Locke, Locke would have written differently; and if Locke had not

written before Horne Tooke, it is probable that Horne Tooke would not have written at all. For I think it is certain that Horne Tooke derived his first hints of his system of language from Locke's third book—on the imperfections of language, the use and abuse, and *manner of signification* of words. But with regard to your question, I say, no. For although I believe that every primitive word arose out of some accident or circumstance, or something or other which connected it with the thing signified, yet it is by no means a necessity that this accident or circumstance should have been the *same* all over the world. But independently of this, it is by no means certain that there was not a time when there was but one language. At all events, it is *almost certain* that there was a time when there were not more than three or four languages. The multiplicity of languages through which some words can be traced, and shown to be the same—proves this, I think, beyond question. Thus the word *mother* can be readily traced through twelve languages.

Sanscrit, *mātr*

Persian, *mādr*

Russian, *mater*

Erse, *mathair*

Greek, *meeteer*

Latin, *mater*

German, *mutter*

Dutch, *moeder*

Anglo-Saxon, *modor*

Danish and Swedish, *moder*

Modern English, *mother*

#### Sister through thirteen—

Sanscrit, *swastri*

Anglo-Saxon, *swuster*

Low German, *süster*

Dutch, *zuster*

German, *schwester*

Moesogothic, *swistar*

Danish, *söster*

Swedish, *syster*

Icelandic, *systir*

Russian, *sestra*

Lettish, *sessu*

Finland, *sisä*

Modern English, *sister*

#### Brother through nineteen—

Sanscrit, *bhrātr*

Russian, *brātr*

Welsh, *brawd*

Erse, *brathair*

Irish, *brutha*

Greek, *phrateer*

Tartar, *bruder*

German, *bruder*

Moesogothic, *brothar*

Anglo-Saxon, *brothor*

Dutch, *broader*

Danish and Swedish, *broder*

Latin, *frater*

Icelandic, *brodur*

French, *frère, frère*

Armenian, *breur*

Persian, *brādr*

Modern English, *brother*

Dr. Armstrong, in his Gaelic Dictionary, has traced the word *sack* through, I think, seventeen (or more) different languages; and Sharon Turner has pursued the word *father* through more than *five hundred*: and shown it to be the *same word in all*. Numerous other instances may be seen in Dr. Prichard's *Celtic Nations*.

As an instance of the *uselessness* of words when once they have lost their appropriate inherent meaning—as a proof that when they have lost that meaning, they may mean anything or nothing, and are therefore no longer capable of communicating ideas—let us examine the word *wit*. This word is a part of the Anglo-Saxon *witan* (to know), and signifies knowledge. But it has lost this its legitimate sense; and now let us open Dr. Johnson's folio dictionary and see if we can ascertain its meaning there. Here it is. He says it means—

1. The powers of the mind—the mental faculties—the intellects.

2. Imagination.

3. Sentiments produced by quickness of fancy.

4. A man of fancy.

5. A man of genius.

6. Sense—judgment.

7. In the plural, *intellects not crazed*.

8. Contrivance—stratagem—power of expedients.

Elsewhere he says it means, “a good thought well expressed.”

A vast number of learned men have tried to find out what the word *wit* means, but they all differ from each other. Addison devoted several essays to the subject, but left both the word and its meaning just where he found it. He decided, however, what it did *not* mean—viz. neither acrostics, anagrams, chronograms, epigrams, nor puns. He might as well have told us that it does not signify either a Jack pudding, a corkscrew, or a cucumber. Dryden says, it means “propriety of words and sentiments.” If this be what the word means, then Euclid's



Elements of Mathematics must be the wittiest book in the world. Locke says, the word signifies “an assemblage of ideas, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance and congruity; thereby to make a pleasant picture, and agreeable vision to the fancy.” Pope says, it means

“Nature to advantage drest,  
What oft was thought, but ne’er so well expressed.”

Sir William Davenant says, it signifies different qualities in different persons. For instance: “in divines, humility, exemplariness, and moderation; in statesmen, gravity, vigilance, benign complacency, secrecy, patience, dispatch; in leaders of armies, valour, faithfulness, temperance, dexterity in punishing and rewarding, &c.” “He might as well,” says a writer in one of our periodicals, “have gone on thus:” “in tanners, the judicious dressing of a hide—in carpenters, adroitness in handling their tools—in cutlers, the careful tempering and sharpening of razors”—in sausage-makers, the honest stuffing of skins with wholesome pork, and not the flesh of half-starved cats. Swift says,

“True wit is like the precious stone  
Dug from the Indian mine,  
Which boasts two various powers in one,  
To cut as well as shine.

Genius, like that, if polished right,  
With the same gift abounds;  
Appears at once both keen and bright,  
And sparkles while it wounds.”

Well—now then—what is the meaning of the word wit?

B.

I confess I am no wiser now than I was before, notwithstanding the laborious explanations of these learned authorities.

A.

No—how should you? Of the eight *different* meanings which Johnson has given, *five* are from *one* author. This author, therefore, uses the word in five *different* senses. Six *other* authors (those which I have just quoted) have given us six *other different* meanings. How can such a word be possibly understood? How can it serve to communicate ideas? How

can that be said properly to be the sign of *anything at all* which is used as the sign of *fourteen* things *indifferently*? What claim can it have to be considered as an instrument of knowledge? On the contrary, must it not necessarily be an instrument of confusion? Suppose an admiral were to hoist a signal flag, which stood in the signal books as the sign of fourteen different orders, leaving every one of the captains of vessels to attach to it whichever of the fourteen he thought proper—could anything but confusion be the result?

B.

But may not the meaning of a word be determined by the context?

A.

That is to say: might not the captains ascertain the particular meaning (out of the fourteen) of the signal flag—that is to say, might they not ascertain the intentions of the admiral by reference to his *previous orders*—to those which immediately preceded or succeeded the particular flag in question—and to his general character and conduct on such or similar occasions? Why, certainly, if the captains could have time allowed them to sit down and consider for an hour or so before they obeyed the order, they might be able to form a *shrewd guess*, perhaps; but even then I fear, they would not all guess right. But even if they all *should* happen to guess right, and if the execution of that order should chance to lead to any disastrous results, the admiral might shift the whole of the responsibility off his own shoulders upon those of the captains, by asserting that he had not meant, by the flag, that which the captains had understood by it—that he had meant *some other* of the fourteen significations which stood opposite that particular flag in the signal books. No language can bind a man if it may be used in this loose manner. All responsibility must be at an end at this rate, and all language can be but a rope of sand, as far as it concerns human obligations. No man can be bound by what he says. And oh! what a prolific source of fraud and crime has been this licentious use of words. It was of this that Queen Elizabeth is said to have availed herself, to cover her inhumanity in giving orders for the execution of the beautiful but unhappy Mary of Scotland.

It cannot, however, be said that the meaning of *any word* is determined by the context. For in these cases, the word whose meaning is said to be determined by the context, *has no meaning at all*. The meaning attributed to the word is not *in the word*, but *in the context*. It is the context which *means*—the word means *nothing*, and its place may be just as well supplied by a blank space or a dash thus —. For instance; “this piece of wood is so — that it quite turns the edge of my knife.” “I am so        that I can hardly keep my eyes open.” “The window is so        from the ground, that it is no wonder she broke her leg in leaping from it.” “This coffee is so        that I can scarcely drink it without scalding my mouth.” You may either leave these spaces blank, or fill them up with the word *witty*. In either case they will still be intelligible, because the sense is conveyed wholly by the context—or rather, you are left to guess at the meaning of the word left out; and in these instances you may guess correctly, because there is but *one meaning* which can make sense of the whole. And the same meaning is still demanded, use what word you will. “This coffee is so *witty* that I can scarcely drink it without scalding my mouth.” Dr. Johnson would tell you that here the word *witty* means *very hot*.” “The weather is so *witty* that I can scarcely keep myself warm before the fire.” Here the great lexicographer would tell us that *witty* means *very cold*. Thus the context may seem to make *any word* mean *anything*—even opposite extremes. But this is ridiculous. Every word must either have a meaning of *its own*, or none at all.

But instances must perpetually occur, in which the context cannot possibly form a peg on which to hang the meaning of a word. Suppose Sir William Davenant had met a friend who attached to the word *wit* the meaning given it by Swift, and said to him that he had just parted with an extremely witty clergyman. His friend could not possibly understand what sort of man Sir William meant. For in his friend’s mind the phrase “*witty man*” would have stood as the sign of one whose conversation could “cut as well as shine,” and “sparkle while it wounded;” whereas Sir William would have meant to indicate one whose conversation was remarkable for “humility and



moderation." This word *WIT*, therefore, having lost its *inherent* meaning, and having now only an *arbitrary* one, is, in fact, for any useful purpose of speech, a mere idle breath, a bubble, a brutum fulmen, a nutshell without a kernel. Apply all this to *other* words of far greater *importance*, and you cannot fail to see how necessary to the dearest concerns of life is a clear knowledge and a proper and definite application of proper words to their proper meanings. Suppose this word were one, (and there are many in the like predicament; for instance, the words insanity, right, wrong, good and bad) upon the proper and universal understanding of which the welfare of the state, and the happiness of man depended—must not confusion, hopeless and inextricable, necessarily result from its unsettled meaning? If those who *make* the laws, and those who are to *obey* the laws, understood the most important words in the *language* of the laws, *differently*, what other result can be *expected* than that which we see, every day, actually does result—universal dissatisfaction, hostile interests, heart-burnings, threatenings, and every species of gall, wormwood and bitterness? In this state of things, he who should definitely settle the true meaning of this word *WIT*, would render a more acceptable service to his country, than if he should conquer a continent, and add its revenues to her treasury.

## CHAPTER V.

### CONNEXION BETWEEN WORDS AND THINGS CONTINUED.

I remember, some few years ago, a man had shot another man's duck, and then carried it off. The proprietor of the duck brought an action against the thief for stealing his duck. But Lord Tenterden ruled that the action could not be maintained,

forasmuch as the witnesses proved that the man had stolen *one thing*, while the action was brought for having stolen *another*. The action was brought against the man for having stolen a *duck*—which is *one thing*—while the witnesses proved that he had only stolen a *dead duck*—which is *another thing*. The man killed *the duck*, and then stole the *dead duck*. The man should have been prosecuted, *first*, for having killed a *duck*, and *secondly*, for having stolen the *dead duck*. I remember perfectly that the witlings of the day—forgetting the “*ne sutor ultra crepidam*,” *let not the cobbler go beyond his last*—giggled at this most wise and just decision of that learned judge.

Let us imagine a parallel case, and observe what must have been the consequence of an opposite decision. I live (let us suppose) next door to you. I know your horse and his qualities perfectly, being in the habit of seeing him every day, and having often admired his figure and action. Nay, I may have occasionally borrowed him, and both ridden and driven him myself. I meet you on a Monday mounted on this horse—I stop to speak with you—admire the fine health and condition of the animal, and finally offer to give you seventy guineas for him, which you refuse. On Tuesday morning, however, you come to my house, tell me you are suddenly and unexpectedly severely pressed for money, and that, if I be in the same mind, and can let you have the money immediately, you will take my offer for your horse. I count down the money, and, in the course of the day, send over my servant for the horse, who finds him *dead*, having hung himself in his halter during the night. I bring an action against you. It is tried by Lord Tenterden, who, having decided that a duck and a *dead duck* are one and the same thing, must also have decided that a horse and a *dead horse* are one and the same thing also—must have told me that I had got that which I had purchased, viz. a *horse*—and that I must abide by my bargain. There are few persons, I believe, who would consider such a decision a just one. Those who could not see that a duck and a dead duck are two different things, would see readily enough that there is a vast difference between a horse and a *dead horse*; for if a horse and a *dead horse* be the *same thing*, they must, of necessity, be of the *same value*. Had I been

one of those who asserted that a *dead duck* and a duck are the *same thing*, I must also have agreed that a horse and a *dead horse* are the *same thing*. How, therefore, could I possibly be willing to give seventy guineas for the *one*, while I refused to give anything at all for the *other*, seeing that I had already agreed that they are both *one and the same thing*? I must have been bound by my bargain, even by my own logic. But one would have supposed that there could have been no need of any argument to prove that a duck and a *dead duck* are two distinct things, it is so broadly manifest; and even our common forms of speech acknowledge the difference. For if they be the *same thing*, why do we call them by *different names*? What need is there to use the word DEAD at all, if it be not to point out a distinction? But there can be no distinction between things which are *identical*! Again, if a duck and a *dead duck* be the same thing, why can we not speak of killing a *dead duck* with the same propriety that we speak of killing a *duck*? Again, is yonder bird which I see swimming in the pond a *duck*?

B.

Yes.

A.

Is it a *dead duck*?

B.

Certainly not.

A.

If that which is a duck be *not* a dead duck, I cannot conceive how a dead duck can be that which is a duck. For that is the same thing as though you were to say that a thing is that which it is *not*. For to affirm that *white* is not *black*, is the same as to affirm that *black* is not *white*. In both instances what you affirm is simply that the *two things are not identical*—and this affirmation remains the same *whichever* of the two terms you mention first—that is, whether you say that a *duck* is not a *dead duck*, or whether you reverse the proposition, and say that a *dead duck* is not a *duck*. It makes not the slightest difference in the nature of the affirmation whether I say, “a man is not a horse,” or “a horse is not a man”—in both instances I merely affirm that there is a difference between a horse and a man.



Wherever it can be affirmed that A is not B, it can also, and with equal truth, be affirmed that B is not A. If, therefore, it can be affirmed (as you have just seen it can be) that a *duck* is not a *dead duck*, it can also with equal truth be affirmed that a *dead duck* is not a *duck*.

Things which have *different attributes* cannot be the *same*. Duck is a name given to a thing endowed with certain attributes, amongst which is the power of *voluntary motion*. Has a *dead duck* the attribute of voluntary motion? If you were describing a duck to a person who had never seen or heard of a duck before, amongst other things, if you described it truly, you would be compelled to tell him that it was a bird which could both swim on water, and fly through the air. But a *dead duck* can do neither of these things. How, in the name of common sense, can those things be identical of which the same thing cannot be affirmed?

And it is the same with words. A word which has lost its *attribute* of communicating ideas has no longer any title to be called a *word*. It is an empty sound—an “insignificant noise”—a dead duck; and he who uses such words does not *speak*—he merely “makes a noise.”

B.

There is a very important word, intimately connected with the subject under consideration, to which you have made no allusion. I mean the word KNOWLEDGE.

A.

I have as yet nothing to do with important words. We have not yet arrived at the proper place for discussing them. I am at present only endeavouring to point out to you the great importance of *words in general*, considered as the instruments of knowledge, and also as the causes of human strife, and of a large portion of human misery. The silly prejudice (and as mischievous as silly) that the study of the nature of words is of no consequence, is so deeply rooted that it will require infinite care and pains, and reiteration of proofs, to remove it. If, in attempting this, I have advanced nothing which is new, or if I have dwelt too long on some parts of the subject, or have too often reiterated the same thing, I have only followed the example of

a greater than I. "If," says Mr. Locke, "thou findest little in it new or instructive to thee, thou art not to blame me for it. It was not meant for those who have already mastered this subject." And again, "I shall frankly avow that I have sometimes dwelt long upon the same argument, and expressed it different ways, with a quite different design. I pretend not to publish this essay for the information of men of large thoughts and quick apprehension. To such masters of knowledge I profess myself a scholar." And again, "Some objects need be turned on every side; and when the notion is new, as I confess some of these are to me, or out of the ordinary road, as I suspect they will appear to others, 'tis not one simple view of it that will gain it admittance into every understanding, or fix it there with a clear and lasting impression. There are few, I believe, who have not observed in themselves or others, that what, in one way of proposing, was very obscure, another way of expressing it has made very clear and intelligible; though afterward the mind found little difference in the phrases, and wondered why one failed to be understood more than the other. But every thing does not hit alike upon every man's imagination." This, therefore, is not the proper place for discussing the meaning of the word knowledge. But you are right. It is an important word, and one which must be carefully considered by and bye. But I shall only now stop to observe, that the relation which subsists between *words* and that which we call *knowledge*, is the same as that which exists between the figures in a merchant's ledger and the money which they represent. As no merchant can acquire much wealth without paying very accurate attention to figures, so neither can a man acquire much knowledge without paying very accurate attention to *words*. In the world of knowledge a *word* is what a bank-note is in the commercial world. A word is a bill of exchange payable *on demand*, not in gold, but in knowledge. When the holder of a bill payable on demand chooses, he has a right to apply to the acceptor of the bill for its *value in gold*; and whenever a man chooses, he has a right to apply to him who addresses him in words for their *value in knowledge*. If he to whom he thus applies cannot give him *value* for his words in *knowledge*, he is precisely in the same

situation as he who, on being applied to, cannot give *value* for his bill *in gold*.

And again, as a bank-note or bill is but waste paper of no earthly use or significance, unless the *amount of gold* which it represents be fixed, and engraven on the note itself, so that all men can understand it alike; so words are, in like manner, but wasted breath of no earthly use or significance, unless the *amount of knowledge* which they represent be also fixed, and, as it were, engraven on the words themselves, so that all men may understand it, and estimate it alike. If the value of a note be not fixed—if one man may estimate it at one value, and another at another—if the value of the note be not legibly expressed on the face of it—if the value be *arbitrary*—then it is perfectly manifest, that such a note is of *no value at all* as a medium of exchange in the commercial world, and an instrument for the acquisition of wealth—and the acquisition of wealth is to the commercial world what the acquisition of knowledge is to the philosophical world, viz. the one grand object of pursuit. And bank-notes in the one, and words in the other, are merely *instruments* for the achievement of these two great objects. And so if words have not their *value in knowledge* engraved upon them, so that all men may understand it and estimate it alike—if their *value in knowledge* be arbitrary—then it is equally clear that, like the notes just mentioned, they possess no value at all, and can no longer be employed as *instruments in the acquisition of knowledge*. They are of less value than the creaking of a door upon its hinge, for *that* informs you that the hinge requires greasing; whereas such words inform you of nothing—save the folly or knavery of him who uses them. But as you cannot tell of *which of these two* they are the sign, you are still left totally in the dark.

But, although notes, whose value is uncertain, cannot be used fairly and legitimately as a medium of exchange amongst honorable men in the commercial world, they may still be palmed upon the ignorant and unwary by cunning swindlers, and thus become the instruments of extensive plunder. And in the world of moral, political, and legal knowledge, precisely the same thing is true of words *whose meaning is uncertain*, and the



plunder of which they are thus, by sharp-witted knavery, made the instruments, is the most important of all species of plunder—for it is the *plunder of human happiness*.

Such and so intimate, therefore, is the connexion between words and any large amount of knowledge, that the one is imperiously necessary to the existence of the other. Without words, a man could possess no more knowledge than his dog. It is *speech* which defines the difference between the knowledge of brutes and men; since it is the want of words which *limits* the knowledge of the former, and the possession of an *illimitable* abundance of *words* which renders man's *knowledge* almost *illimitable* also.

Let us suppose, for example, that some one man possesses twelve ideas, and no more. You may make it twelve millions if you like. But let us, for convenience of calculation, say twelve ideas, and no more. He associates with fifty other men, each also possessing twelve *other* and *different* ideas. These fifty other men, by means of words, communicate each his twelve ideas to this man, who thus becomes the possessor of six hundred and twelve ideas, or portions of knowledge, instead of his original number of twelve. And this astonishing increase of knowledge may be accomplished in an hour or two. But in a herd of elephants, mark the difference. An elephant, which has been transported from his native jungle, and carried about as a spectacle, acquires numerous new ideas. He acquires ideas of crowds of people presenting different appearances, the voice, and various intonations of his keeper, the den in which he is confined, his bath, &c. &c. But if this elephant be replaced in the herd from which he was withdrawn, he can convey none of his new ideas to the rest of the herd; and whatever was the number of ideas which each individual wild elephant originally possessed, they must still, all of them, die possessed of exactly that same number, and no more. And this happens solely because the tame elephant wants the faculty of speech. He cannot *tell* his companions what he has seen.

#### B.

You have put all this *ingeniously*, at least, and I think *forcibly* too, and although I am not yet prepared to say that I either

agree with you, or disagree with you, having never before bestowed a single thought upon the subject, yet you have said enough certainly to induce me to *think upon these things*, and I am already conscious of some new trains of thought arising from what you have advanced, which may ultimately lead perhaps to things not hitherto “dreamed of in my philosophy,” and which might never have arisen but for this conversation.

A.

That is all I expect, hope, or wish. I expect no man to pin his faith upon my sleeve. A man who does this is unworthy the name of a reasonable being. He is a mere automaton—who thinks (if he may be said to think at all) with another man’s brains, and who speaks with another man’s tongue—a mere machine, moved by another man’s energies—and he ought to be condemned to eat with another man’s mouth. He is not one jot superior to the donkey which he drives in the same manner as he himself is driven by another. The *reader* has no concern whatever with the *writer*, nor the hearer with the speaker. His whole and sole concern is with what is said or written, and he must judge of the truth of what is said or written by virtue solely of his *own reason*. If a man write against drunkenness, and, in order to show its evil influence on the health of man, describe minutely the anatomy of all the organs of the body, the nature of life, the several actions which the several organs are destined to perform in the human economy, and then prove that the effect of intoxicating drinks is to alter the structure of these organs—is necessarily hostile to the nature of life—has a manifest tendency to alter and disorder the healthy actions of all the organs—if he do all this, and the reader’s reason acknowledge that it is so, what does it signify though the writer should be known to get beastly drunk every day of his life? This cannot alter the truth of what he has written. It is not the *man* who writes or teaches—he is but an *interpreter*—it is nature herself who speaks, and teaches the doctrine that drunkenness is hostile to health. It is *anatomy* which teaches this—it is *physiology* which teaches this—it is the nature of life which teaches this—the writer himself is but the *interpreter of their language*, and it does not

matter one straw to the value of the doctrine taught, whether the writer be a drunkard or not a drunkard. If I read a book and become a convert to its doctrines, it is because my reason approves them. What know I or care I about the author? If I be convinced, it is my own reason which has convinced me. The author has written certain things. I measure them by the standard of my own reason, and receive them or reject them accordingly. If it were afterward proved that they were written by an idiot or a madman, what then? That which is consonant with reason and the nature of things cannot be made otherwise by any earthly means. The pain which I feel from a blow on my shin is the same, whether that blow be inflicted by a fool or a philosopher. The knowledge which enlightens my mind is the same, come from what source it may. Many excellent moral treatises have been written by men of highly immoral character—poor Colton to wit. The wisdom they teach does not become folly because they who taught it were fools! Could it be proved that Euclid was stark-staring mad when he wrote his elements of mathematics, their truth would still remain unshaken. But there are men who, having pinned their faith upon the sleeves of one or two favourite authors, never exercise their own reason afterward, but judge of the truth of everything accordingly as it tallies or not with their doctrines. They do not say, “is such and such a thing *true*?” But they say, “does it *agree* with what I have been taught by such and such a one?” These people do not want to discover the *truth*. They are only in search of pillows to bolster up preconceived opinions—no matter whether they be right or wrong, for that is a question which they never ask. Such men are less worthy than the beast of the field. For the beast does not reason much, because he *cannot*—but they, because they *will* not. They insult their Creator by despising his best gift. They are dishonest stewards, for they do not employ to advantage the talents of gold wherewith they are entrusted. They are like the Hindu devotees who voluntarily shut their eyes, and keep them closed till they die. When I am talking, therefore, imagine it is a post which speaks, or a dog that barks—only listen, and *think* for yourself. I pretend to do no more than offer you food for thought.



B.

I was about to observe, that I think you might have carried your parallel between words and bank-notes one step farther. For as bank-notes are only valuable for the amount of gold which they represent, so gold also is of little value but for the *things* which it also represents—viz. the *things* which are purchaseable by gold. And as words are only useful for the *ideas* which they represent, so also are ideas only valuable for the things of which they are the symbols.

A.

No. The parallel will not hold beyond the point to which I have carried it. For though gold is, by general consent, made to represent *things*, yet it does not *necessarily* so. There is no *necessary* connexion between gold and things purchaseable by gold, and it might exist without being made the symbol of anything, and doubtless at one time did so exist. But there is a *necessary connexion* between ideas and the things of which they are the symbols, and ideas can no more exist without the things or sensations which they represent, than a shadow can exist without a substance; and precisely the same relation which exists between shadow and substance, exists also between ideas and the things or sensations of which they are the symbols, viz. the relation of *cause and effect*. To suppose that ideas can exist independent of things or sensations, is precisely the same as to suppose that an effect can exist without a cause, a shadow without a substance, a creation without a Creator. And this brings me to another method of illustrating the relation between words and ideas.

Did you ever look into a penny peep-show?

B.

Very often.

A.

Did you observe that on that side on which the exhibitor stands there were several little cords passing through holes in the wood-work, and hanging down, in a row, on the outside?

B.

Oh! yes—I understand the mechanism.

## A.

Very well. When you first apply your eye to the glass and look through it into the interior, you see nothing. Presently the man pulls the first cord, and you see a picture, which may contain a single figure only, or several. Presently that picture vanishes, and another cord is pulled, and another picture appears. And so on to the number of a dozen probably. The man always allows you what he considers, I suppose, a reasonable time to dwell on each representation. But suppose he were to pull the cords one after the other with very great rapidity indeed, you would not be able to have a distinct view of any one of them. You would be only just sensible that a succession of pictures had past before you, but you would not comprehend any of them. If he were to pull the cords with the rapidity of lightning, or, which is still more rapid, the velocity of thought, then you would see no more than if he had not pulled them at all—that is, nothing. And if you really wished to examine and ascertain what the pictures were about, you would be compelled to request the man to pull one cord only at a time, and allow you sufficient leisure to contemplate *one* picture before he pulled another cord. Now I say that the human mind is a penny peep-show—that *words* are the *cords*—and that ideas are the pictures which display themselves in obedience to the power of those words. The mind is a stage, having numberless little shadowy actors concealed behind the scenes. And words are little magic spells, each word having power over one or more of these little phantasms, and the moment a word is uttered, that particular phantasm, or group of phantasms, over which that particular word exercises its power, comes from behind the scenes and exhibits itself on the stage. This, then, is the office of words—to call from their lurking places behind the scenes, certain of these phantasms, and cause them to exhibit themselves upon the stage; and words which have not this power are only idle sounds. They are broken spells.

Thus, when an ancient Greek pronounced the word *hippos*, that sound instantly acted like a spell upon the idea of a horse, which was *already present* (behind the scenes) in the mind of his *Greek* hearer, and caused it to issue from its lurking place,

and present itself on the stage, and so become visible, as it were, to his mental eye. But if he spoke to an *English* hearer, the spell would be broken—the charm would have lost its power—none of the ideas in his hearer's mind would obey the call. Or if any did (for they stand like “gray-hounds in the slip,” always on the watch and ready for a start, and are sometimes, in their eagerness, apt to start forward at the slightest sound and before it is fully uttered, and therefore before they can know, as it were, which particular idea is called for)—I say if any *did* present themselves on the stage of the English hearer's mind at the utterance of the word *hippos*, they would be almost certain to be the wrong ones, and would instantly retreat again to their hiding places. It will be observed from all this that we do not, properly speaking, *convey* our ideas to others. A man does not, and cannot, take an idea out of his own mind and put it into another man's. He merely pronounces a spell, which has the power to conjure from its secret chamber in the mind of another man, an idea *already there*. If it be not there already, no possible power of language can put it there. And this is extremely important, and must be remembered.

Now to make this illustration as simple and clear as possible, let us suppose that there are concealed behind the scenes of the stage of your mind seven groups of ideas, and let us farther imagine that they are numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Let us also suppose that there are behind the scenes in my mind six groups numbered also in the same way, so that group no. 1 in my mind is the exact counterpart of group no. 1 in your mind; and so on. Now when I am conversing with you, let us imagine that group no. 1 is exhibiting itself on the stage of my mind, and I desire to cause its counterpart to exhibit itself on the stage of your mind. All I have to do is to pronounce the words no. 1, and the group no. 1 instantly appears on the stage of your mind, and thus we two are contemplating the same group of ideas, or, in other words, we clearly understand each other. But now suppose that our several groups of ideas are numbered *differently*. Suppose that group which I have numbered no. 1, you have numbered no. 2. And what I call no. 2, you call no. 1. Now let us again suppose that group no. 1 is present to



my mind, and I wish to cause its counterpart to be present to your mind. As before, I pronounce the words *no. 1*, and there instantly exhibits itself on the stage of your mind, *not no. 1*, but *no. 2*, because the group which I have taught to answer to the sounds *no. 1*, *you* have taught to answer to the sounds *no. 2*; and consequently we do *not understand* each other, for we are not contemplating the same group of ideas. You are looking at, and speaking about *no. 2*, while I am looking at, and speaking of *no. 1*. But *not knowing* that we have numbered our several groups differently, we still *fancy* that we are both contemplating the same group. Is it to be wondered at, if we quarrel? Is it to be wondered at if we both conceive very unfavourable and mistaken notions of each other's character and conduct? And again, if there be present to your mind *no. 7*, and you wish to cause its counterpart to be present in my mind, you would pronounce the words *no. 7*. But there being only six groups in my mind, you may bawl till you are hoarse, you cannot, in that manner, cause it to become visible to me, because in my mind it has no existence. How then am I to acquire that group of ideas? We shall come to that by and bye.

B.

But what are these little phantoms? Are they material beings, or are they —

A.

There is a proper time for all things, and this is *not* the proper time to answer that question. To proceed: from all this it follows, that unless all men call their ideas by the same names, it is impossible for them to converse together *understandingly*, and without bickerings, and misconceptions of each other's characters and conduct. It also sets, I think, in a clear point of view, the true nature and use of words. It will be manifest also, from this, that not only must each group be called by the same name by all men, but also that each group must be made up of the same single ideas, in all men. For if one of the ideas composing group *no. 1* in my mind, be different from all those composing group *no. 1* in yours, this difference will be quite sufficient to cause misunderstandings and bickerings among us.

I have chosen here to speak of ideas in groups, rather than of single ideas, or rather, I should say of separate ideas, because an isolated idea hardly ever presents itself to the mind entirely unaccompanied by others. The force of ASSOCIATION, as it is called, (a most important thing in the economy of human nature) will intrude others in spite of us. In fact there is scarcely such a thing as a separate idea. We call the idea of a horse a single idea—but it is no such thing—it is a GROUP of many ideas—and the group is made up of the separate ideas of trunk and extremities, head, tail, mane, hoofs, &c. &c.—and it is manifest that each of these is also a group. The ideas composing what we *call* the idea of the head are the separate ideas of eyes, mouth, ears, jaws, hairs, lips, &c. &c. But this is so manifest it is not necessary to dwell upon it, at least not here. Thus if—

## B.

Still harping upon the same string! It seems to me that you are laboring this point tediously and unnecessarily. Why dwell so long and so wordily upon that which I never doubted? No one can question that, unless men call things by the same name, they cannot understand each other! If when you say a HORSE you mean a *windmill*, and when you say cow you mean a *cucumber*, it requires no argument to prove that you will not be understood.

## A.

And yet this is what men are doing every day. When one man uses the word RIGHT, he means exactly what his neighbour would designate by the word WRONG! And so inveterate is this habit of daily using words without reflecting for a moment whether the hearer understands the word in the same sense in which it is used by the speaker—that, I say, it is almost impossible to dwell upon it, and its mischiefs, too long. It is not so easy a matter to break through an old habit, nor to convince a man of the folly of any action which he has been accustomed to perform every hour in the day all his life. You cannot drive a nail into a post at one stroke! You must hammer away in the same place for a considerable time if you would drive it home, and fix it irremovably. In nineteen cases

out of twenty, if you clearly prove a man's conduct wrong or foolish, he will assent to all you say—then think no more about it—and the next hour repeat it. It is not sufficient to set up the truth where all men may see it. It must be *forced* upon their observation. It must be placed before their faces, and their eye-lids held open, as it were, until the *new impression* of the truth has obliterated the *old impression* of error, and thus a new habit has been formed.

B.

In what you have just said of ideas, you have only spoken of such as are derived through the medium of our sense of sight. But surely there—

A.

Do not interrupt me here. I promise you that I will provide for all sorts of ideas in due time. But if you would have me speak intelligibly and explain myself clearly, you must give me time. For the *present*, at least, I desire you to take it for granted, that whatever seems irreconcilable with the truth will be fully and clearly explained in its proper place. If I fail eventually to do this, it will be then time enough to call me to an account, and treat me accordingly. But if you perpetually interrupt me with questions out of their place, this conversation may last longer than I can spare time to devote to it. In the mean time, if anything appear to you to require explanation, or seem in opposition to the truth, make a note of it.

B.

Pardon me one moment while I ask you an irrelevant question. It can be answered in a monosyllable, and therefore will not detain you long. What are your political principles? Are you a reformer?

A.

However simple this question seems, and although I am sincerely anxious to answer you at once *monosyllabically*, aye or no, yet I honestly declare to you that I am unable to do so. Because, although I attach to the word REFORM a clear and definite meaning in my own mind, I am almost certain that the same meaning is not attached to it in yours. And thus, if I were to answer AYE, and afterward were to vote for a tory



member of parliament—or if I were to answer NO, and afterward vote for a whig member, in either case you would say, when you heard of it, that I had either belied my principles, or altered them, or else voted in opposition to them; and thus vilify and blacken my political character unjustly. For in either case my profession of principles and my subsequent vote might be perfectly honest and consistent. In my mind, TO REFORM means *to make or form over again*, and nothing more. Thus, in my mind, the tory who alters whig laws, and the whig who alters tory laws are equally reformers. And when I hear of the *reformation of abuses*, I understand that *abuses* have received, or are about to receive, or it is desired that they should receive, *another and a different form*.

B.

Oh! but the word REFORM does not simply mean alteration.

A.

But I say it does.

B.

It means something more than this.

A.

Let us know wherein that *something more* consists.

B.

Whatever be the intrinsic, etymological meaning, it is universally used to express alteration *for the better*.

A.

Be it so. But this only shifts the difficulty from one word to another. I desire to know the meaning of the word *better*.

B.

Is not this mere quibbling?

A.

For pity's sake spare me that wretched plea of the ignorant—that miserable “refuge for the destitute” in argument. Your very question, “is it not quibbling”? convicts you of ignorance. For if you had a clear idea of the meaning of the word BETTER you would have answered me at once, without stopping to ask whether or not I am quibbling. But you asked me that foolish question simply because you did NOT know the meaning of the word BETTER, and was ashamed to confess it. You asked me

that question, because you could not answer *mine*—because you felt *puzzled*—and because you were unwilling to believe that you had been using a word all your life without knowing what it means. There are many who resort to this plea. No sooner do you attempt to compel them to talk *intelligibly*—no sooner do you request them to give you a clear definition of the meaning of the words they use—than they stop you with: “sir, this is mere quibbling!” Such talkers are only fit to discuss with their wives the mysteries of the manufacture of a pudding or a pie-crust. Nay, not for this. For it is owing to the want of this same *precision*, which they call *quibbling*, that such hosts of cookery books have been laid on the shelf as utterly useless. They directed us to take a *pinch* of this, and a *pinch* of that, and a *handful* of the other—to “*give it a simmer*,” and “*just give it a boil*.” But as a pinch may be taken with *two* fingers as well as one—and as the quantity called a *handful* must vary according to the size of the cook’s hand—these books became entirely useless. But if you were to ask one of these latitudinarian talkers what he meant by a *pinch*, he would tell you: “sir, you are *quibbling*.” I believe it was Dr. Kitchener who, in his *Cook’s Oracle*, first resorted to the *quibbling* expedients of scales and weights; and by virtue of which quibbling he contrived to render his book intelligible and useful. “Two straight lines cannot include a space” is a mathematical axiom. Now suppose you were to discover to-morrow some means of drawing two straight lines, so as that they *could* and *did* include a space, although that space were no larger than the point of a needle. If you asserted and proved that you had done this, these men would say: “sir you are only splitting a hair,” or “sir, you are quibbling.” But what would mathematicians say to it? Why they would instantly blot the axiom from their books as unconditionally false; and were you to prove the next week, that two straight lines might be drawn so as to contain a space equal to a *square yard*, the axiom would not be one jot more completely falsified than it had been by your first discovery. There are no degrees in truth. Whatever is not perfectly true is perfectly false. And now, once more I desire to know the meaning of the word *better*.

B.

Why, I might say that it is the comparative of *good* and *well*. But then you would be asking me the meaning of *good* and *well*.

A.

Undoubtedly I should. And I should also ask you how it can be called the comparative of either *good* or *well* in the following sentence: "yesterday my cough was very *bad*, but to-day it is *better*." Here it seems to be the comparative of *bad*! and instead of meaning *more than good*, as it must do when used as the comparative of *good*, it only means less than *very bad*! or not quite *so bad* as *very bad*! But I suppose that *every* degree of cough is *bad*, and therefore I say that, in the above sentence, *better* is the comparative of *bad*, (if *bad* can have a comparative) since it indicates *one of the degrees* in the severity of a cough, each of which is more or less *bad* when *compared* with another.

B.

Well, then, I must take a more circuitous route in order to convey to you what I understand by the word *better*. It seems to me to indicate progression from the fixed point *perfectly bad*, towards the fixed point *perfectly good*. The moment a thing ceases to be *perfectly bad* it becomes a little *better*, and the farther it recedes from that *fixed point* (perfectly bad) and approaches toward the other fixed point *perfectly good*, it becomes better and better, until it has become perfection. For if you use the word as the comparative of good, and say: "Mr. T has a *good* horse, but Mr. G has a *better*," still both the word *good* and the word *better* do but indicate different degrees on the scale between *worst* and *best*. For they are both better than the *worst*, and not so good as the *best*—*best* being the superlative of *better*.

A.

And thus Mr. H may have a very "*good horse*," but not so good as Mr. T's; and Mr. B may have a very "*good horse*," though *not so good* as Mr. H's. For there can be no comparative without a positive. And consequently, if *better* be the comparative of *good*, then, wherever the phrase "*better horse*"



can be used with propriety—that is, wherever I can truly say that my horse is *better* than *yours*, although even *my* horse be not worth two straws, still *yours* must be *good*, since mine is *better*, and *better* is the comparative of *good*—that is to say, mine is the comparative *better*, of which *yours* is the positive, *good*. Thus *good* and *bad* are made to signify the *same thing*, being applied to the same object. And again, if I possess the very best of all possible horses, and you possess a horse only *one degree worse than mine*, my *very best* of all possible horses becomes, nevertheless, a *bad horse*, since *the worse* (that is, yours) is the comparative of *bad* (that is, mine)—since yours is *comparatively worse*, mine is *positively bad*. That is to say, mine is the positive of your comparative. Thus *bad* and *best* are made to signify the same thing. But, although my *best* of all possible horses is thus proved to be *positively bad*, it is nevertheless *better* than yours—and thus becomes, at one and the same time, *bad*, *better*, and *best*.

B.

This seems a strange jumble, certainly. I cannot refute it on the instant, and yet I can by no means agree with it.

A.

No—you cannot refute it because it is the necessary consequence of your own definition of *better*; and you cannot agree with it because you cannot throw off a deeply-rooted habit, and a long cherished and hitherto unquestioned opinion.

B.

But we are in the daily habit of using this word, and that too in such a manner as to make ourselves perfectly understood.

A.

Yes—in ordinary conversation, where the meanings of *words* can be at once settled, for the time being, by reference to *things*; this word, and many others which are in the like predicament, do very well as they are commonly used. In common conversation on *common sensible objects*, anything serves for a word. If you wish me to put more coals on the fire, you have only first to *look* at me, then *point* to the fire, and finally *nod* towards the coal-scuttle, and I understand you. But looking, and pointing, and nodding, cannot always be resorted to; *if they could* there

would be but little disputing in the world. In ordinary conversation it is not necessary to “speak by the card,” but in matters of philosophy it is.

Now let us see to what your definition of the word *better* will lead us—always taking care to remember that the definition is your own—not mine. We are speaking of the word, you know, in this instance, as it is used in the phrase *alteration for the better*, which, you say, is the sense in which the word reform is generally used. And you say that the state of the laws—the government of the country—has been made *better*, whenever any alteration has brought it one or more degrees nearer to the fixed point *perfectly good*—or, if you will, to the fixed point *good as possible*.

B.

Yes.

A.

Be good enough, before we proceed further, to inform me where this fixed point *perfectly good*, or, *good as possible*, lies. I mean, show me that particular point in the gradual improvement of the system of government, having reached which, all alteration must necessarily be for the worse.

B.

That would be an exceedingly difficult thing to do, if not an impossible.

A.

I think I have never told you that I am something of a sculptor, and sometimes amuse myself with chipping marble. Those specimens which you see on that shelf are the work of my hands. You observe they are of all sorts, sizes, and devices. There is a Psyche, a head of Shakspeare, an urn, an inkstand, a Tam o'Shanter, and Souter John, a sleeping Venus, and many others. But this block of marble which I have some time been carefully rough-hewing is to be my chef-d'œuvre. But I am almost afraid to touch it, for I fear it is scarcely large enough for my purpose, and I scarcely know how to make the most of it. You see here is an ugly stain at this corner which runs quite through the block, and I should like, if possible, to cut it away. But if I do so, I am afraid it will render the block too small for

the execution of my design. What do you think? Would it be large enough without it? Do you think I had *better* venture? I believe too I ought to make this excavation a little deeper; ought I not? And this projection here—would it be *better* to remove it or let it remain? I assure you I am greatly interested in this little work, and shall be really obliged to you if you will give me your attention, and then your opinion as to whether I had *better* make these alterations or not. What are you laughing at?

B.

I am laughing at the idea of your consulting me as to the best manner of hewing your block of marble, but wholly forgetting to tell me what shape it is ultimately to assume. What is it to be?—a man or a brute?—an urn or an inkstand? When I know what it is to be, I may perhaps be able to advise you.

A.

Oh! I cry you mercy. I did not know that was at all necessary. I want to make it a perfect something—no matter what—and I wish to know whether these alterations which I propose will be alterations for the *better* or not—that is, whether they will bring this block nearer in shape to that something than it is at present.

B.

How can I possibly tell that without knowing what that something is? It may be, for aught that I can tell, already as *near as possible* to the shape designed, and therefore every further alteration may only make it more unlike.

A.

Mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur. If you cannot tell me whether certain alterations in the shape of this block of marble will, or will not, bring it nearer to that state or appearance which is the fixed point at which I aim, without knowing what that point is, how can you tell whether certain political alterations be or be not for the *better*—that is, do or do not bring the condition of the country nearer that fixed point of perfection, or, good as possible, without knowing where that point lies, which you have just said “is an exceedingly difficult



thing to know, if not an impossible" ? Reform, you say, signifies alteration *for the better*, and *better* indicates an advance toward perfection ; but if you do not know in what perfection consists, how can you tell whether any advance has been made toward it or not, by those alterations which you call alterations *for the better* ? Not knowing in what perfection exists, it can only be matter of doubtful opinion as to which is the path which conducts to it. And thus an alteration which in one man's opinion leads *toward* perfection, in the opinion of another, leads in a directly opposite direction, so that these two men would apply the opposite terms of *better* and *worse*, to one and the same thing. How then is a third party to know what is the meaning of either of these words ? To that to which one man applies the term *better*, another applies the term *worse*. Have then these two words the same meaning ? I am, as it were, a third party—an indifferent spectator of the conduct of men. I hear great numbers of people applying the word *better* to a particular set of political measures : and I hear great numbers of men applying the same word *better* to a class of measures diametrically opposite to these. How then can you call it *quibbling*, when I ask you the meaning of the word ? You say it means approximation towards a given point. Very well—tell me where this point is—show it to me—and then I shall know the meaning of the word *better*—that is, I shall know where to apply it properly, and also when it is properly applied by others. If a traveller, meeting me at the junction of four roads, should ask me which of the four roads he had *better* take, and if I should direct him to take *this* or *that* particular road, without first enquiring to what particular town or part of the country he desired to proceed, without knowing whether the object of his journey lay in the east, west, north, or south, I should be guilty of only the same folly of which they are guilty, who apply the word *better* to alterations in the social and political condition, without knowing *what or where that condition is* to which these *alterations for the better* are intended to approximate it.

B.

But you will remember that I also said the word *better* indicates recession from *bad*, as well as approach toward perfection.

And as perfection is directly opposed to *bad*, whatever recedes from bad *necessarily* approaches more nearly to perfection ; and although it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to say what condition of society would approach most nearly to *perfectly good*, there can be no difficulty in pointing out what condition is *perfectly bad*.

A.

Is this indeed so easy ? Tell me what condition that is.

B.

One of utter barbarism.

A.

How do you know ?

B.

How do I know ! why you certainly do not mean to deny that a civilized and highly cultivated state of society is preferable to one of ignorant barbarism !

A.

Whenever a man does not give a plain answer to a plain question, I always suspect that the reason is simply because he *cannot*. In the meantime I deny nothing, and affirm nothing. You say, a highly cultivated state of society is better than a barbarous one. Very well—I do not deny it. And I am sure I myself prefer it. I merely wish you to show your reasons for so saying—the means by which you have arrived at that conclusion—the standard by which your judgment on this point has been decided. You seem to think this a strange and unnecessary question. And if you had heard Sir Isaac Newton ask himself the question : “Why does an apple fall *downward* when it is severed from the tree ? Why does it not fall *upward* ?” you would have thought this, too, a very foolish question. But this habit of taking it for granted that we know all about a thing only because we have never doubted it, and never heard it doubted or questioned, is one of the most prolific sources of ignorance. Long before Sir Isaac Newton asked himself this question, I dare say there was not an old woman in the kingdom who would not have felt herself offended had she been asked, why an apple did not fall *upward*. Had you asked her that question, she would have answered you by

repeating it with an air of surprise, just as you have but now answered me; and just as people always *do* answer, whenever they find themselves unexpectedly puzzled on a subject, with which they fancied themselves so thoroughly familiar as never to dream of questioning themselves about it. The old woman would have said: "Why does not an apple fall upward!! why, whoever heard of an apple falling upward? You don't mean to say that an apple can fall upward! How can you ask so foolish a question?" That is precisely the way in which the old woman would have answered the question. But you are not an old woman, and therefore that is *not* the way in which I expect you to answer my questions.

If I be not mistaken, Rousseau was, at least, *one* who did not consider a state of barbarism to be so very bad.

B.

But Rousseau, you know, was little better than a madman.

A.

What certain proof can you offer that you and I are not mad at this moment—madder than he? The madman does not believe himself to be any more mad than you or I. What certain proof have you that it was not Rousseau, but that it is *we* who are mad? My own most grave and deliberate opinion—an opinion which is the result of much reflection—is that, on certain points, both you and I *are* mad—that by very far the greatest number of individuals composing adult society, are really and truly mad. But to prosecute this subject *here* would be to pervert the order of my argument. This nut—this word *mad*—will fall to be cracked in its proper place, when we will carefully examine its kernel, and endeavour to ascertain and *settle* its true meaning.

One would suppose there could be no better judges on this subject than the barbarians themselves. But go ask them. Go, pluck the Arab from his steed of a hundred sires, and ask him which he prefers—his own wild and barbarous life, or ours. But deal honestly with him. Tell him how we live—or rather, bring him hither and let him see. Take him first to the tailor's shop—show him a dozen men sitting neck and heels together on a board, sewing cloth from morning till night all the year



round, and say to him, "this is the way in which *one* class of civilized men, consisting of many thousands, pass their lives." Take him to the shoemaker's shop, and show him a dozen men sitting on a stool from morning till night, all the year round, bending over a stone which lies upon their knees, sewing *leather*, and say to him, "this is the way in which *another* class of civilized men, consisting of many thousands, pass *their* lives." Take him to the engineer's workshops, and show him five or six hundred men, besmeared with smoke and perspiration, and toiling from morning till night, all the year round, filing, and heating, and melting, and moulding, and hammering *iron*, and say to him, "this is the manner in which another class of civilized men, also consisting of many thousands, pass *their* lives." Take him to the workshops of Mr. Cubitt and Mr. Seddon, and show him eight or ten hundred men arranged, rank and file, beside long rows of wooden benches, sawing, and planing, and chiselling *wood*, from morning till night, all the year round, and say to him, "this is the way in which *another* class of civilized men, also consisting of many thousands, pass *their* lives." Take him to the various shop-keepers, and show him hundreds of thin, pale, cadaverous, young men and women, standing from morning till night, all the year round, behind certain long tables, called counters, in long, dusky shops, lighted and heated, and smoked with numberless gas-lights, and say to the wild Arab, "this is the way in which *another* class of civilized men, also consisting of many thousands, pass *their* lives." Take him to the factories, and show him thousands of little half-naked children, imprisoned all day, and toiling from morning till night, all the year round, with bent limbs, and thoughtful, anxious, care-worn looks, and say to the barbarian, "this is the way in which *another* class of civilized men and women, also consisting of many thousands, pass *their* childhood—that season of thoughtless *ease* and *frolic fun*." Take him to the haunts of the pale and spectral silk-weaver, show him two or three men and women, shut up in a room, twelve feet square, for sixteen hours a day, all the year round, toiling with both hands and feet at once, and say to him, "this is the way in which *another* class of civilized men and women pass *their*

lives." Take him to the coal mines in the north, and the quicksilver mines, and the lead mines, and show him a number of strange demon-like looking figures, emerging by hundreds out of the bowels of the earth, *within* which they toil from morning till night, all the year round, breathing unwholesome damp, and poisoned vapours, and every now and then a dozen or so blown out of the world by an explosion, or buried beneath falling masses of earth, and say to the uncivilized stranger, "this is the way in which *another* class of your civilized brothers, also consisting of many thousands, pass *their* lives." Take him into the country, and show him the agricultural labourers, some ploughing, some sowing, some reaping, some mowing, some thrashing in the barn, but all *toiling* from morning till night, all the year round, in order to keep themselves from starving, and say to the uncultivated savage, "this is the way in which *another* class of civilized men pass *their* lives." Take him to the halls and *salons* of our wealthy Magnates and our proud nobility, and show him three hundred people crammed into rooms, not too large for fifty, respiring for hours the breath that has been already breathed two or three times over, some elbowing their way through the crowd by way of walking, some seated round a table, throwing backward and forward certain little bits of painted paper, called cards, and some jumping up and down, according to certain prescribed figures, which *they* call dancing, and somebody else calls the *poetry of motion*, (which latter phrase, not being English, nor any other language which I happen to understand, I cannot of course translate)—show the vulgarian Arab all this, and say, "this is the way in which *another* class of civilized men and women, also consisting of some thousands, pass *their* lives." Take him to the seats of learning, the universities, and show him men, shut up in little dark rooms, poring over books full of strange marks and devices, from morning till night, and say to him, "this is the way in which *another* class of civilized men pass *their* lives." Take him to the dispensing rooms of our medical men, and to the shops of our druggists, and say to him, "this the way in which *another* class of civilized men, also consisting of many thousands, pass

*their* lives—viz. in compounding drugs to cure the diseases which are incidental to every class, and every age, sort, and denomination of civilized men, women, and children.” Take him to our hospitals, and show him thousands of beds, every bed containing a victim of disease—take him to our prisons and our prison-ships, and our penal colonies, and say to him, “this is the way in which *another* class of civilized men, consisting of hundreds of thousands, are doomed to pass a portion, at least, of *their* lives.” Take him to the graves of the buried dead, and show him heaps upon heaps of mouldering bones, and say to him, “these are the remains of *another* class of civilized men—*strangled* for a crime peculiar to civilized states—the crime of forgery.” Take him to the field of Waterloo—to the valleys and hills of Spain—to the green fields of Ireland—to the heaths of Scotland—to the ditches and waysides between France and Russia—to the spot where ONCE Moscow stood; take him to the broad plains of the East, where civilization was earliest known, to the country of the Jews—plough up the soil, and say to the barbarian, “this soil—the soil of these civilized countries—has been enriched by the blood of *another* class of civilized men—fattened by the dead bodies of millions upon millions of civilized men, who butchered each other *honorably* and *gloriously*, not by dozens, after the manner of barbarians, but by tens and twenties of thousands, after the manner of civilized men, and who died triumphantly, and whose names are enrolled as the names of heroes in all the histories of all the civilized nations of the earth.” Take him, in short, everywhere, and show him a fair sample of the manner in which all the great classes of civilized men pass their lives; and then invite him to exchange his barren desert for the fat soil of fertile England, and I will wage my life against a pin’s head, that he will angrily demand of you to “give him back his Arab steed,” and having mounted which, will hie him back to the desert as though he were flying from plague, pestilence, and famine.

Fire and sword, gunpowder and the blood-hound, the arguments authorised by a civilized pope, to be used in order to civilize the American Indian, could not compel him to exchange



his barbarous condition for the condition of civilized men. He chose rather to be exterminated—he and all his tribe.

He—the barbarian himself—will tell you, therefore, that his own condition, so far from being *perfectly bad*, is infinitely better than yours. Here, then, are two opinions concerning this word *bad*. You say it is a right use of the word to apply it to a barbarous condition of society. The Arab tells us that it is only then properly applied, when used to designate a highly cultivated condition. Which is right? Where is to be found the umpire, unprejudiced, belonging himself to neither party, who is competent to decide between you? Each considers his own state, habits, and manners the best—which only means that HE *likes* them best. Each erects his *own* likings and dislikings into a pattern by which he expects all the rest of the world to model theirs. “Vade mecum” is in every man’s mouth—whom shall we trust? “Sic itur ad astra” is on every man’s tongue—whom shall we follow?

Thus it is that the consideration of words conducts to the consideration of things. These words have no meaning at all as at present used—they are merely expressive of ever-changing opinion. Thus, what is called good in one country, is called bad in another—what is good in one country in one age, is bad in the same country in another age. A few years since, in our own country, it was good or right to hang men for forgery—now it is *bad* or wrong to do so. For ages it has been thought right to hang men for murder—there are many *now* who declare it to be wrong. But as man, in all essentials, is everywhere the same, good and bad, right and wrong, with reference to him, cannot be peculiar to any age or country, but must be universal and immutable, like the nature of the being to whose conduct they are applied, and like the laws of that nature which he derives from his Creator. Such words are destitute, therefore, of the power of words, and can never become instruments of knowledge, but by a reference to the standard of things. These words are words of comparison, but there can be no *useful* comparison of things without a standard whereby to compare and measure them. Weights and measures are comparative things, but of what use would these be without a

standard whereby to regulate and compare them. One man's pound would be another man's ounce, and the foot of one would be another's inch. This indispensable standard of right and wrong, good and bad, must be sought for, and can only be found, in the laws of God—engraven as they are on the imperishable monument of his works, and in a language equally and unmistakeably intelligible to all the nations of the earth. "Conjectures and theories of men will always be found very unlike," says the Rev. Dr. Thos. Reid, "the creatures of God. If we would know the works of God, we must consult themselves with attention and humility, without daring to add anything of ours to what they declare. *A just interpretation of nature is the only sound and orthodox philosophy*: whatever we add of our own is apocryphal and of no authority."—*An enquiry into the human Mind on the principles of common sense*. But this is not the proper place to discuss this part of my subject. We shall come to it by and bye.

## B.

What in the world does the word *better* mean then? For according to your previous assertions every word has its own appropriate meaning—this, therefore, amongst others—and I confess myself quite at a loss.

## A.

I believe it is only a different and more ancient way of spelling our word *beater*—i. e., striker, smiter—one who does or can strike, smite, or *beat* another. The word was anciently written *bett* or *bet*, out of which the Anglo-Saxons formed their verb *betan*, *to make amends*. Now the Mœsogothic *bot* signified amends, reparation, or compensation for injury done: out of which word the Mœsogoths made their verb *botan*, *to make amends, or compensation for injury done*. And as the Anglo-Saxon verb *betan*, and the Mœsogothic *botan* have the same signification, so I suppose the words *from which they were formed* had also the same signification. I believe, therefore, that the Anglo-Saxon *bet* is no other than this same Mœsogothic *bot*, differently spelled because differently *pronounced* by different northern tribes, and signifies *compensation* or *amends*. Our word *better* is still frequently pronounced by the lower orders in some of the provinces,

batter, butter, and botter; and if they had occasion to write the word, they would write it as they *pronounce* it. But I believe the word *betan*, to make amends, is the same word as *beatan*, to beat; since to *beat* a man who has done you an injury, is, in fact, to make yourself amends for that injury. If this is not the fashion now-a-days, it certainly was with our ancestors. But we still say, "I will have satisfaction—or I have taken satisfaction—or I will give him satisfaction"—meaning, "I will fight him—or have fought him." In this mode of speaking, the two phrases, to *fight*, and to *take satisfaction*, i. e. compensation or amends for an injury, are used synonymously, and both have the same meaning. As the Anglo-Saxons used one word (*beatan*) to signify both to *beat*, and to *take compensation*, in like manner we use the modern word *punish*. When we mean, "I will beat you," we frequently say, "I will *punish* you." But *punish* comes to us through the Latin *punio*, from the Greek *poinao*, which signifies to *take compensation*. The third person singular of *beatan* is *bet*, he *beats*. The third person singular of *betan* is also *bet*, he makes *amends*. I conceive, therefore, that these two verbs are the same, and both signify to *beat*. Now, the Anglo-Saxon word *beatere* signifies a champion—one who is ready and thought to be able to *beat* all comers. Our word *better* is identical with this word *beatere*, and signifies what we should now express by the word *beater*, that is, one who does or can *beat*, *thrash*, *overcome*, others. We still use the word *beat* as expressive of superior excellence. And we mean the same thing whether we say, "my horse is *better* than yours"—or "my horse can *beat* yours"—or "my horse is the *beater* of yours," that is, the *better* of the two. We use other words of the same kind in the same manner; "I can *thrash* you at chess"—"I received a terrible *thrashing* at billiards last night"—and the Americans say, "America *flogs* the world." All these words, thus used, signify to *overcome*, to *conquer*.

Our word *excellent* has a similar origin in another language; it comes to us from the Latin *excellens*, which signifies *excellent* (which is, in fact, the *same word*, with an English termination). But the word *excellens* is only the present participle of



the verb *excello*, which signifies *to beat*, or *strike*; and our verb *to excel*, being only the same word as the Latin *excello*, with an English termination, signifies properly, therefore, *to beat*, *to strike*. So that an *excellent* man—that is, one who *excels*—properly signifies one who *beats*, or is able, or thought able, *to beat* or thrash most other men. And, per contra, one who *beats*, or can, or is thought able, *to beat* or thrash most other men, is an *excellent* man—that is, one who *excels*, or is *better* (as we say) than other men. And when we recollect what is the true meaning of the word *good*, it will be very manifest why the word *better*, that is, *beater*, was used for what we call the *comparative* of that same word *good*. *Good*, anciently written *gode*, more anciently still, *god*, *goth*, *guth*, and *gud*, signifies *strength*, vigor, warlike energy, activity, and prowess. The Greek word which answers to our word *good* is *agathos*, which also, in its primitive sense, signifies *energy*, *activity*, *strength*. Indeed it seems to be the same word as *guth*, having only a prefix and suffix. For, take away the prefix *a* and we have *gathos*; and by removing the suffix *os*, we have *gath*, which is unquestionably the same word as the Anglo-Saxon *guth*, and signifies strength in war. So also the word which, in Greek, bears the same relation to *agathos*, which the English word *better* bears to the word *good*, is *areion*; and the Greek word which answers to our word *best* is *aristos*. But both these words are derived from other words which denote warlike strength. It is to be remembered also that the only quality considered by our Anglo-Saxon ancestors as worthy of admiration was physical strength. Since, therefore, the phrase *good man* really means only a *strong man*, it is a very proper and analogous use of language to designate a still *stronger man than he* by the word *beater*—thereby signifying one who is *stronger*, and therefore who is able to *beat him*, to *thrash him*. The words *good* and *better* are used in the present day by the vulgar precisely in these senses. It is very common to hear such expressions as these following, pass between men who are quarrelling, and who are disposed to settle their differences by fighting: “I am as good a man as you whenever you like to try”—meaning, “as strong a man.” “I am a better man than you any day in the week”—meaning, “I am able to thrash you

any day in the week." We have an old English proverb too in which this word *good* is used in its proper sense of *strong*: "as *good* as George of Green"—meaning as *strong*, this George of Green being the famous Pindar of Wakefield, who fought with Robin Hood and Little John, and *beat* them both—thus proving himself the better, that is, stronger, man.

Having thus reduced the word *good* to a determinate meaning, the meaning of the word *better* becomes manifest enough. For if a *good man* be a *strong man*, then a *better* is one who can *beat* or thrash him. And if this be doubted, it can be easily settled by experiment. But if I say, "I am a better man than you"—using the word, as it is ordinarily used, as the comparative of *good*—how is it possible for me to prove it? How is it possible even that I should be understood? since the word *good* is used not only by different nations, but by different people of the same counties, to express *different* things? But personal strength is a standard which can be resorted to in every corner of the globe. The words *good* and *better*, therefore, if used in their true and legitimate sense, can cause no lasting dispute. But I call all the civilized nations of the earth to witness that these words, and their equivalents, used as they have been and still are, only to designate opinion—*opinion*, that moral chameleon—have caused a million times more human bloodshed, more widely-spreading, root-and-branch desolation, more pitiless, inhuman and murderous cruelty, than all the vicious propensities of poor backbitten human nature, in her very rudest condition, put together. Truly have they, in the language of our mother tongue, "Cwealm-dreone swealh thes middan-geard."—*Cadmon*.

It is easy to see how the word *better*, first applied only to denote superior personal strength, became afterwards *figuratively* used to designate superiority of every kind among other things. As for instance, "my house is *better* than yours;" that is, "my house *excels*, that is, *beats* yours in magnitude, value," &c. &c.

B.

But you say this extraordinary word *better* was anciently written *bet* or *bett*. How did it acquire the last syllable *ER*?

A.

You know that we call him who supplies us with milk, a milk-

*man*, and him who supplies us with butter, a butter-*man*; him who rows us across the ferry, a ferry-*man*, or water-*man*; him who keeps an oil shop we call an oil-*man*, and him who brings food for the cat, a cat's-meat-*man*, and her who washes our clothes, a washer-*woman*. The Anglo-Saxon word *wer*, sometimes written *were*, signifies a man, and they used it in the same way. Sometimes they put it *before* the word to which they joined it, and then they preserved the *w*, as *were-wulf*, a *man-wolf*—*wer-had*, *man-hood*—*wer-gyld*, *man-money*, that is, the fine for slaying a man—*wer-lic*, *manlike*, or *manly*. Sometimes they put it *after* the word as we do, and then they dropped the *w*, as *pleg-ere*, a play-*man*, or player—*sæd-ere*, a sow-*man*, or sower—*writ-ere*, a writ-*man*, or writer—*beat-ere*, a beat-*man*, or beater, that is, a *man* who is able, or thought to be able, to *beat* other men—a champion. We frequently drop the *w* in the middle of a word in the same manner. Thus we do not say an-*swer*, but an-*ser*, when we pronounce the word *answer*. Nor when we pronounce the word *Warwick*, do we say War-*wick*, but War-*rick*. Our ancestors dropped the *w* in the same way, and as they spelled as they pronounced, they also dropped it in their writings. Thus the word *bett*, *he beats*, became *bett-wer*, and finally, dropping the *w*, as we do in the word *answer*, it became *bett-er*, *better*, that is, a *bett-man*, or a man who can *bett* or *beat* others. So much for the word *better*—I have cracked this one nut somewhat out of place, before dinner as it were, by way of sample.

B.

Well, you have got over that difficulty better than I anticipated. That is to say, you have regulated the meanings of these two words by the standard of the admiral's book, as you call it. But how is the admiral's book itself regulated? What was the standard by which the admiral's book was itself formed, and by which we are to measure the propriety of the meanings therein annexed to words? You will not, I suppose, allow even the admiral himself to use *arbitrary* signals?

A.

Certainly not. When the admiral was engaged in forming his *book of signals* he took for his sole guide and standard the *book of nature*. Words must be the names or signs of some-



thing or other. But where are we to look for that *something* if it do not exist in *rerum naturâ*—if it be not to be found in the nature of things? No word can be used as an *instrument of knowledge* which cannot be traced to its origin, either in the internal world of man's sensations, or the external world of things. The primeval inventors of words were acquainted with nothing which was not contained within one or other of these two worlds, and could not have invented names for things which, for them, had no existence. It is thus, therefore, that the study of words, if we would speak intelligibly, and shut the door against endless and bootless disputation, *forces* us to the consideration of things—since there can be no end to disputes without some standard or arbiter which may be referred to, and since the *nature of things* is the only possible standard which is at once unchangeable, infallible, and impartial. It is the office of the admiral's book, therefore, to assign to each *word* the idea of which that *word* is the sign. And it is the *book of nature* into which we must look for the *thing* of which that *idea* is the sign. While such words as *good, right, justice, insanity*, are used without reference to some impartial and immutable standard by which to measure and settle their meaning, they must ever be a source of interminable disputes and the bitterest hostilities. But having once erected a standard whose infallibility none can deny, such disputes and hostilities must necessarily cease. While the word *good* continues to be used without reference to such a standard, it will continue to be, as for ages it has been, a prolific source of dissension, even to the extent of bloodshed. But let the word be used in the sense which alone belongs to it, and there can be no dispute about it. Would two men, think you, quarrelling about who was the *stronger* man be able to enlist the people of an entire empire in their cause, and set whole nations together by the ears? No! The people would say to them: "if you want to know which is the stronger, stand up and try. We have no time to listen to your idle brawls, which concern only yourselves, not us." And if they refused to do this, they would be left to the sole enjoyment of their own bickerings, and the peace of the rest would be undisturbed. But I do not wish you to give it this sense of **STRONG** which

is attached to it in the admiral's book, if you do not like it. I do not care *what meaning* you give it. Only when you furnish a meaning, let it be a *possible* meaning, and at the same time furnish us with a rule, in lieu of the admiral's book, by which ALL MEN may know what the meaning is—a rule which shall render possible the universal adoption of the same meaning, so as to preclude dispute.

B.

If I understand you rightly, you say that there is no important word which is not the sign of one or more ideas or sensations, excepting only such words as are the signs of other words.

A.

Important words! I say that there is no word which is not the sign of one or more ideas. For even those words which are the signs of other words may very properly be said to be the signs of all the ideas of which those *other words* would have been the sign if used. When an Englishman reads Greek and meets with the word *andres*, that word, to him, is the sign of his own word *men*. But this is only because he is not sufficiently accustomed to the use of Greek words to refer each Greek word at once to the idea which it represents; and he only gets at the *idea* through the medium of an equivalent word in his own tongue. But, in reality, the word *andres* is as much the sign of the ideas represented by our word *men*, as is the word *men* itself. It is the same with short-hand. The single mark which, in some systems of short-hand, stands for the *word* man, may just as well be said to stand for the *idea* of man. There is great similarity between the language of highly civilized nations and short-hand. The former, like the latter, is a system of abbreviations for expedition's sake, in which one word is made to stand for several, or if you like it better, for all the ideas signified by several words. This indeed has been the great cause of the misapplication of words, as I believe I have before said.

B.

Then you mean gravely to assert that such words as *by, in, out, but, to, from, till, the, that, and, an, a*, as well as such words as *justice, insanity, mad, right, perfect, truth, &c.* have all a distinct and positive meaning, *appreciable* according to the nature of things?

A.

I do—and not only the words, but also every *letter* even of which those words are composed.

B.

You certainly excite my curiosity; and I am sure I shall be amused, whether I be convinced or not. So go on.

A.

But before I arrive at this part of my subject I have much to do. And I confess I am surprised that, all this time, you have never yet once asked me what I *mean* by the word *meaning*! This is a proof of the inveteracy of habit, and of the truth of what I have before said, viz., that one cannot drive a nail into a post at one blow. We have been talking almost of nothing else but the *meanings* of words, and of the uncertainty of the meanings which are annexed to them, and yet you have never once asked me the meaning of this same most important word *meaning*!—the very pivot on which the whole of my argument turns—the very hinge on which it hangs!

B.

Upon my life it is very droll—but it never once occurred to me.

A.

Occurred to you! No—I know that. And this is the way men talk and listen every hour of their lives—in using, and hearing, and replying to words without paying the slightest attention to what those words mean. Surely it was truly said of such men, they “do but gabble like things most brutish.”

B.

But by the word *meaning* you intend the *sense* in which a word is to be understood.

A.

Ay—there it is. I ask you to give me gold for my paper, and you only give me another piece of paper. I ask you to give me a thing for my word, and you only give me another word. But when I ask you to cash my paper, I don’t want more paper, but that which is represented by paper, viz. gold. And when I ask you to cash my words, I don’t want more words, but that which is represented by words, viz., things. This is quite in the



style of Dr. Samuel Johnson, who tells you that *right* means *not wrong*, and that *wrong* means *not right*—that *sinister* means *not dexter*, and *dexter* means *not sinister*. There can be no more certain proof of the gross ignorance which prevails through society, of the nature and use of language, and consequently of the nature and use of their mother tongue, than the great applause which was awarded to Dr. S. Johnson for his dictionary. One looks in vain into this work for the *meanings* of words. He only tells you how certain authors used them *instead* of other words. Thus, if any modern popular author chose to use the word cucumber as a substitute for cow's tail, some future Samuel Johnson would tell his readers that *sometimes* the word cucumber signifies a cow's tail. "It must be confessed," says the learned and acute author of the *Επεα πτεροεντα*, "that his (Johnson's) Grammar, and History and Dictionary of what he calls the English language, are in all respects (except the bulk of the latter) most truly contemptible performances; and a reproach to the learning and industry of a nation which could receive them with the slightest approbation. Nearly one third of this dictionary is as much the language of the Hottentots as of the English; and it would be no difficult matter so to translate any one of the plainest and most popular numbers of the *Spectator* into the language of that dictionary, that no mere Englishman, though well read in his own language, would be able to comprehend one sentence of it." This is perfectly true. The book, as a standard work, is a disgrace to the country; and a new dictionary is most imperatively called for.

B.

What then do you mean by the word *meaning*?

A.

Be patient. You can only learn the meaning of the word *meaning* from the consideration of the *nature of ideas*, and their connexion with *things*.

B.

You have put me on my guard now. I therefore desire to be informed at once what is the meaning of the word *idea*.

A.

Dr. Samuel Johnson says it means mental imagination.

Had the doctor *two* imaginations, then, that he found it necessary to distinguish the word imagination by the word mental? But let us consult the admiral's book. Let us see how we come by this word, and by whom, and for what purpose, it was first made. It is purely a Greek word, every letter of it, letter for letter—*idea* in Greek, *idea* in Latin, *idea* in English. We have not naturalized this word, as we generally do, by altering its termination, but we have borrowed it, whole and entire, just as it is, from the Greek. But how came the Greeks by it? Thus. They had a very good word signifying *to see*. It was *eido*, sometimes written *ido*, and sometimes *eideo*, pronounced in English *ido* or *ideo*. They had also a general term significative of all the various matters which make up the sum of the universe. It was *chrema*, a word equivalent with our word *thing*. But most of these *chremata*—these *things*, at least those with which the Greeks were acquainted, can be recognised by the sense of feeling as well as by that of sight. For instance, we can see a horse, but then we can feel him also. The word horse conveys to the mind not only the figure of a horse, but many other attributes which belong to a horse—weight and substance (as we call them) amongst the number. But the Greeks, when they began to philosophise, wanted a word, that is, a name for what they could see and see *only*—a name for that which they could see, but could neither feel, hear, taste, nor smell. They wanted a name for the shape, figure, or appearance of a thing wholly irrespective of its substance, weight, or solidity. When I look at the wall of this room, I do not see the wall, because the wall is covered with plaster and hidden from my view. Neither do I see the plaster, because the plaster is covered with paper. But I do not see the paper, for it is covered with what we call color. But color does not reside in the paper, it resides in the rays of light which are reflected from the paper; and when you take the light away, I see nothing at all. The light—the differently colored rays of light, blended together so as to form every possible shade of what we call color—is all that we can see—is all that ever has been seen since the creation of the world. We ascertain the *existence* of material *things* solely by our sense of feeling. The

eye does not give us one iota of information on the subject. But I can hardly expect you to understand this just yet, for I am perfectly certain that you do not know the meaning of that commonest of all words, the word *thing*. I should think you must have used this word *thing* some hundreds of times every day for the last forty years, and yet, I say, I am certain that you do not know its meaning, and probably never thought of asking yourself whether it have any meaning at all. And yet it has an excellent meaning of its own, as *every* word *must* have. Neither do you know the meaning of the words *matter* and *existence*, and I cannot stop just now to explain them. Still I think a little reflection may convince you that we really see nothing but light. If you remove the light you can see nothing—everything in the room seems to have vanished—they may be still there or they may not—you know nothing about the matter—the chairs and tables are to you as though they had never been. You remember that they were in the room before the light was excluded, and your reason assures you that they could not have been removed without detection by your *other* senses—your hearing, for instance. But for all that your eyes can tell you about the matter, they may have every one of them been removed. When the light is restored, its rays strike against every object, and are reflected from every point of each object back again to your eyes, and form minute pictures of them on that part of your eyes called the retina. This retina is a little looking-glass, in which your brain perceives the pictures of surrounding objects, just as you perceive the picture of your face in your shaving-glass. The reason why objects appear to you of their natural size, notwithstanding the minuteness of the pictures drawn on the retina of the eye, you may easily learn by referring to any work on optics. What enables us to distinguish one object from another is their variety of color. One object possesses the property of reflecting, that is, sending back to the eye only those particular rays which, being blended together, form the color which we call brown—as, for instance, a mahogany chair—and of absorbing all the other rays. Another object, as, for instance, the wall against which that mahogany chair stands, has the property of returning to the eye only those



rays of light whose blended colors form what we call French gray. This difference of color enables us to distinguish the chair from the wall. But if both chair and wall were of exactly the same color, and if the light fell upon them everywhere alike so as to form no shadow, then the chair would seem to resolve itself into the wall, and we could not distinguish it from the wall, and could not know that there was a chair there. We could no more see the chair than we could see a drawing made on paper, which paper was of exactly the same color with the materials used in making the drawing. If you make a *perfectly black* mark on a piece of *perfectly black* paper, with a piece of *perfectly black* chalk, can you see it? Certainly not. But the mark is there nevertheless. This proves incontestibly that what we see are merely differently colored rays of light.

I have in my study a table made of common deal wood. But it is veneered with a veneering of mahogany, about one sixteenth of an inch in thickness. Now it is manifest, that in looking at this deal table, you can only see the mahogany veneering. Now, imagine this veneering to be in thickness only the hundredth part of an inch—or thousandth—or millionth—or ten millionth—it is equally manifest that you could still see only the veneering, and not the deal table which is beneath it. You may continue to diminish the thickness of the veneering, in your mind, until it really has no more substance than has a ray of light. Still it is equally manifest that you can see the veneering, and nothing but the veneering, however thin it may be. Very well—this is precisely the case with every object in nature. Everything is veneered with a veneering—not of mahogany—but of colored light. And it is this veneering, and nothing but this veneering, which we see. If you ask me, how I know this? in the words of Locke, I “send you to your senses to be informed.” Go and try. Remove this veneering—that is, exclude every particle of light, and then tell me what you can see. Literally, positively, and absolutely nothing—no more than you could if nothing really existed. It is true, when you have removed the veneering of mahogany you can see the deal table. But that is because, when you have removed the veneering of mahogany, you have made room for and

admitted the veneering of light. But now treat the veneering of light as you treated the veneering of mahogany—that is, remove it—remove the light—and what has become of your table? It is gone. It has vanished. You cannot see it. Nor have you any possible means of knowing whether it be really gone, or whether it be still there, but by testimony—the testimony of another sense—the sense of feeling. There is a curtain of colored light hanging before every object in creation which conceals all things from our vision. We can see the curtain, but if we attempt to raise it in order to peep behind it, behold! all things have vanished, and we can see nothing at all. Or it would be more analogous to say, that every object in nature is wrapt up in a *garment* of colored light which accurately fits it at every point; and that, when this garment is removed, we can see nothing. You would be ready to swear that you see yonder marble bust of Napoleon. But if, unknown to you, some cunning artizan were to envelope it entirely in a fine *marbled paper*, the exact counterpart, in all appearance, to the real marble which you now suppose you see, you would be equally ready to swear that you saw the marble. Whereas it is evident, in that case, you would only see its garment of *paper*—just as, in reality, you now only see its garment of light. The things which make up the universe never have been and never will be seen. We can see nothing but light. But we can feel them. It is our feeling and memory which prevent us from breaking our faces against posts. I could never know that a post could hurt me, or obstruct my path, if I had not felt it, or something like it, and recollected it.

As colored light, therefore, is all that I can see, and as this is not a substance, commonly so called, and cannot offer any resistance to a moving body, I should not know but that I could walk through that wall just as easily as I can walk through the shadow of a house, or of a tree, if it were not for the information which I have derived from my other sense, viz. of feeling. For all the information to the contrary which my eyes can give me, I could just as easily and safely walk through a stone wall, or upon the surface of still water, as I could through a cloud of smoke or upon the surface of a sheet of ice. My eyes can and

do tell me nothing to the contrary. For we cannot *see* either weight, substance, solidity, or resistance. We can only learn to understand these from the sense of feeling. All that we can *see* is figure, shape, extension, &c., although experience always causes us to connect in our minds, these notions with the other notions of weight, solidity, substance, &c.

The Greeks, I say, wanted a word to express this appearance, likeness, figure, or representation of things, wholly independent of the things themselves. In fact, they wanted a name for the *ghosts* of things—apparitions of things which can be seen, but not felt—so they made this word *idea* out of the word *eideo*, to see. As *eideo*, then, signifies to see, and properly to see only, *idea* signifies that which can be seen, and *seen* only. It is exactly equivalent with our words similitude, appearance, figure, likeness. I think it was the Greek philosopher Plato, who first used this word to indicate those likenesses of things which exist in the mind—those phantasmata, for instance, which we see in our dreams. “Plato appears to have conceived of the divine principle as distinct, not merely from matter, but from the efficient cause, and as eternally containing within itself ideas of intelligible forms, which, flowing from the fountain of the divine essence, have in themselves a real existence, and in the formation of the visible world, were, by the energy of the efficient cause, united to matter to produce sensible bodies. These ideas, Plato defines to be the peculiar natures of things, or essences as such; and asserts that they always remain the same, without beginning or end.” So that Plato’s *ideas* were a sort of skeletons to be filled up with matter. Plato is generally considered an exceedingly difficult Greek author—it is hard to understand him. And well it may! But I say it is just as difficult to understand him when translated into plain English, as it is in the original Greek, for in both instances it is impossible. Plato did not understand himself. If he had, it would have been easy for others to understand him also; for “when the waters are clear it is easy to see to the bottom.” In Plato’s conception of the nature of things, his doctrines of ideas, intelligible forms, essences, &c., there is not a whit more sense than there is in the braying of an ass. But the divine



Broad-shoulders—for Plato's original name was Aristocles, and he got the name of Plato from the breadth of his shoulders, and the other name, Divine, from his supposed wisdom—but the Divine Plato, I say, is not the only philosopher who has written vast quantities of sheer nonsense about ideas, essences, substances, qualities, &c. Des Cartes, Malebranche, the immortal Locke himself, Bishop Berkeley, Dugald Stuart, David Hume, with heaps upon heaps of other men of great erudition, and unquestionable talent, have all written mountains upon mountains of the most pure, unqualified, unadulterated nonsense upon the same subjects. To these, Locke forms an exception; for in *his* bushel of chaff there is a single grain of wheat, which is more than can be said of the others. And why have these learned and talented men written so very absurdly upon these subjects. Simply and solely because they did not understand the meanings of the words they used. Because they did not understand the nature and use of language.

I understand Sir Graves C. Haughton, author of an invaluable Sanscrit dictionary, has published a work on these subjects; but I have not seen it.

B.

But if so many learned and clever men have written so much nonsense, and all, except Locke, nothing but nonsense, about these same ideas, how shall I assure myself that what you are about to say will not be nonsense too?

A.

A very shrewd, sensible, and proper question—and one which shows you are not asleep. But I have an answer ready—an answer which would satisfy even Pyrrho himself, who doubted of everything—and it is this: because you shall UNDERSTAND me, because every man shall understand me, from the horny-handed tiller of the soil up to the acute and highly educated metaphysical logician. Your very errand boy shall understand me, because what I say shall be in accordance with the common sense of all mankind, and not in opposition to it, like the doctrines of the Bishop of Cloyne, who wrote a book expressly in order to prove that there is nothing real in nature; but that all things are merely ideal, and that the chairs and tables in his house were not really

chairs and tables, but only their ghosts. Of this book David Hume, the acutest metaphysician that ever lived, said, that "though nobody could believe it, yet nobody could disprove it." Dr. Samuel Johnson did disprove it though, by kicking his foot against a stone, which, in my opinion, was the wisest and most sensible argument that Dr. Samuel Johnson ever used. I firmly believe the most abstruse sciences, algebra, trigonometry, fluxions, are all equally level with the capacity of the commonest ploughman, were they *properly* explained to him; although he might not have education enough to enable him to write his own name, or to read it when printed. The only inlets to every species of knowledge are the senses. And what sense has God given to the prince which he has denied to the pedlar? What sense has he given to the Gentile that he has not given in equal perfection to the Jew? Is the organization of the ploughman's eye less perfect than that of the philosopher? Cannot his ears hear, and his nerves feel, with as much precision as those of the astronomer, the geometrician, and algebraist? And what sources of knowledge have these latter which the ploughman has not? I say none—none. The ploughman has his five senses, and the philosopher has no more; and the five senses of the one are in all respects similar to the five senses of the other. Has the philosopher a larger brain than the ploughman? Go open their skulls and see. I have seen the brains of many a ploughman—or at least of many of the genus ploughmen—and I also saw the brain of Jeremy Bentham—a great man, a wise man, a learned man, and a philosopher. Wherein did they differ? Go ask the plate wherein it differs from the platter. But these learned philosophers—these mathematicians and astronomers—have a language of their own, like the Indian Brahmans. They talk of their sines and co-sines, their segments, tangents, radii, and angles. But tell a ploughman that by their radii they mean nothing in the world but the spokes of his waggon wheel, and that an angle is only another word for the point of his ploughshare, and he will understand them as well as the acutest philosopher of them all. Will he not? The whole difficulty lies in the nature of the words and phrases used to impart these sciences. And as these are not understood by the teacher, he

cannot explain them to the pupil; and if a pupil do not understand the language in which it is attempted to instruct him in a science, how can he hope to acquire the science itself? Said he not well and truly—he—Horne Tooke—that all sciences must finally centre in the science of language? That is the true *meanings* of words? I say that all real knowledge is but *common sense*, and may be understood by all who possess common sense, and that whatever is not common sense, however it may be dignified by learned terms and a technical phraseology, is nothing in the world but common nonsense. I will give you a hasty instance of the truth of what I have just said about the language of science, in order to impress it more firmly on your mind, and then return in search of my “lost idea.” If you say to a ploughman: “Mr. Ploughman, are you aware that your hat is subject to the law of gravitation?” he will stare at you, and answer, “no.” But if you say: “are you aware that, if I knock your hat off your head, it will fall to the ground?” he will perfectly understand you and answer, “yes.” Now I affirm that these two questions are but simply one and the same, only put in a different form of language. And I undertake to make you as intimately and thoroughly acquainted with the nature of ideas, and the whole science of metaphysics, that impenetrable rock, which has split the skulls and confounded the wits of the philosophers of all countries and all ages, as you are with the nature of the commonest objects in this room—say the poker and tongs. Observe, I say, *as well*, not *better*. Will this satisfy you?

B.

Perfectly.

A.

I must insist, however, on being allowed to travel on, step by step, in my own way. The noblest, the most useful trees, and those which live the longest, are usually those which are of the slowest growth. By the way, if you will *remind* me (for otherwise I shall probably forget it) when I come to speak more connectedly and particularly of the meanings of words, I will show you how the dead languages, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, may be acquired in an incredibly short time—certainly in a less number of months than the usual number of years now devoted to them.



The word *idea*, I have shown, properly signifies figure, likeness, or appearance. These are English words exactly equivalent with the Greek word *idea*. Now since we have English words exactly equivalent with this heathen word *idea*—English words which all Englishmen understand—for instance, the word *likeness*—why did not Locke, who wrote a great book all about ideas—why did not Locke, I say, use one of these same good old English words which we all understand? What did he want with a heathenish Greek word? Why did he take the trouble to sail all the way up the Mediterranean, in order to bring home this foreigner whom nobody wanted, and nobody knew? He surely would not have done this without some strong motive? Men are always actuated by some motive, although they are frequently, indeed almost always, themselves unacquainted with that motive. This was Locke's case. Locke had an excellent reason for using a Greek word, although, to do him justice, I verily believe he was not himself aware of it. Had Locke used the plain English word *likeness*, the mischief of it would have been, that every one would have understood it! Had he used the word *likeness*, Locke himself could not have helped understanding himself. He must then infallibly have known when he was writing nonsense, and when he was writing sense. But in this case, as no man would knowingly write mere nonsense, he must have finished his book at the end of his eightieth page, instead of carrying it on to seven hundred and eleven. He must have given up nineteen twentieths of his hypothesis. What philosopher can be expected to submit to this? But what was he to do? If he used the word *likeness*, his readers, and his own common sense, would be constantly annoying him with impertinent questions. "Likeness of *what*?" "Likeness of *what*?" they would cry. Locke was fully aware that he would have very often indeed found it impossible to explain this "what," although he also felt that he would be bound to do so. At this rate—that is, if he had been compelled to write nothing but what he could himself understand and explain to others—his book would have dwindled to a mere pamphlet of eighty pages, unworthy the name and repetition of a learned philosopher—I mean for its bulk. I say, for its bulk—for these eighty

pages, which form the single grain of wheat in Locke's bushel of chaff, contain truths of immense importance to knowledge, and have immortalized their author as a brilliant exception to all other metaphysicians. But if Locke had used a word of a clear and definite meaning which could not be mistaken, he must have been compelled, on all occasions, to make his hypothesis yield and bend to the fixed meaning of that word. But he did not like to see his hypothesis warped and bent to the meaning of a word, but he wanted a word whose accommodating meaning would bend this way or that—hither and thither—any way, in fact in order to accommodate itself to his hypothesis. So he chose the Greek word *idea*, which, not being clearly or definitely understood either by himself or his readers, might, at any and all times, be taken to mean anything or nothing, just as his hypothesis required. When his hypothesis was in good health, it (the word *idea*) had a very good and definite meaning, viz., *likeness*. But whenever his hypothesis fell sick of an idea in this sense, and seemed likely to die, he administered a dose of physic to the word, purged away this unwholesome meaning, and so set his hypothesis on its legs again.

It is really wonderfully curious to observe how readily the wisest men do impose upon their own understandings! Locke, with the view of making his readers clearly acquainted, as he supposed, with what he meant by the word *idea*, imitated the mathematicians, and, as Bacon advises all philosophers to do, set down at a very early part of his book a definition of what he himself meant by that word. I have already shown you what the word really means, which Locke also admits in his definition. But one meaning was not enough to keep his hypothesis in good health. Accordingly his definition of the word makes it mean anything and everything. These are his words: "Whatever the mind perceives," (that is, sees) "in itself, or is the immediate object of perception," (which is only another way of saying the same thing) "thought, or understanding, *that* I call an idea." Now it is perfectly obvious, according to this definition, that either the whole universe is composed of nothing but ideas, as Bishop Berkeley asserted, or else the word *idea* means anything and everything which the universe contains; for there is

nothing in the universe that may not be made the "object of thought," and, according to Locke, whatever can be the immediate object of thought is an idea. For instance, pain may be an immediate object of thought. Pain, therefore, according to Locke, is an idea. To talk, therefore, of the "idea of pain," is the same thing as to talk of the "idea of 'an idea'!" Locke could only escape from this by making the word signify one thing in one place, and another in another. But some readers, not knowing clearly what the word idea means, and taking it for granted that the phrase "idea of an idea" must mean something or other, although they could not exactly see what—I say, some readers there are who might perhaps pass over even this expression without much wincing. But had Locke used the word likeness—had he talked of the "likeness of a likeness"—heaven and earth! who could endure it?

But he could never have persuaded his readers to believe that the word likeness signified all this, and yet it signifies full as much as the word idea does. People will read, and even praise a book, if they be not compelled to understand it. But if you compel them to understand it by using plain words, whose meanings cannot be mistaken, then they will insist upon having sense, and not nonsense. Thus they would read the phrase "idea of softness" with all possible complacency, but had Locke written "likeness of softness," they would have been very apt to cavil at it as unintelligible. Although, therefore, Locke has defined what he means by the word idea, he means so many things that, whenever his hypothesis gets into a scrape and seems in danger of being taken in the fact—caught tripping—there are always plenty of back doors standing ready open for her to escape through.

But whatever these ideas, or likenesses, or appearances, or skeleton forms may be, let us see how we come by them.

This question Locke has put beyond the possibility of doubt now and for ever. He has proved incontestibly that we acquire all our ideas through the medium of our senses—that there are and can be no such things as innate ideas—that is, ideas born with us, and in us, as a part of our nature. He has further proved that all human knowledge is derived from these ideas, and *therefore*,



that all human knowledge is derived from the evidence of our senses.

B.

Pardon me a moment. I remember that a short time after your critique on Lord Brougham's Theology was published in the Metropolitan Magazine, in which you asserted, as you have done now, that, according to Locke, we derive all our ideas from our senses—I was in company with a gentleman who remarked that Locke does *not* say that all our ideas come to us through the windows of our senses.

A.

I have not said that Locke did say so. I do not now say that Locke said so, or wrote so,—I only say that Locke *proved* it to be so. He did not know it—he did not mean to do it—but he did it nevertheless. His case was the case of many. In proving what he wished to prove, he proved more than he intended. I do not know who this gentleman is, or was, but whoever he may be, he must have read pretty much as a parrot would read if parrots could be taught to read at all. This gentleman did not read Locke's book, he only read Locke. He did not weigh the sense of Locke's doctrines in the balance of his own understanding. He only read Locke's words, as a parrot might do, and took the sense for granted. All he knows, therefore, about Locke's book is what a child would know who had been compelled to get the work by heart. He knows whether Locke *said* this, or did not *say* that, but whether what Locke said was right or wrong, is a matter which he seems willing to allow is altogether beyond the reach of his comprehension. Your friend reminds me of the disciples of Pythagoras. When they were questioned about any of the Pythagorean doctrines,—whenever they were asked to give a reason for their belief—the invariable answer was, "*autos epha*"—"ipse dixit"—"Pythagoras said so." There was no replying to an argument like this—it settled all disputes, and silenced all doubts. It was a court of conscience from which there was no appeal. It was what the amiable Mr. Richard Swiveller would call an "undeniable staggerer." But this is not the way to read a book. When men read a work they should not care to know whether it was written by a Mr.

Locke, or Mr. Stocke, or by Mr. *the-man-in-the-moon*. They are only concerned with the book, and nothing but the book. If what the book contains be clearly evident to the reader's senses, or irreconcilable to his senses, the name of the author cannot make it otherwise. We never think of walking with other men's legs, nor of tying our cravats with other men's fingers—then why should we ever think of seeing with other men's eyes, or of hearing with other men's ears? I have five capital truth-telling senses of my own, a clear unclouded eye, an excellent pair of ears, and a palate so judicious that I can tell in a moment the difference between the flavour of a roasted duck and a gooseberry pie. What occasion have I, therefore, to borrow the senses of another man? If what I see in a book be in accordance with the evidence of my five senses, I will believe it though an idiot write it. But if what I see contradict the evidence of my senses, I will *not* believe it, though it be the joint production of seventeen thousand philosophers. For what is the office of an instructor of men? Is it to invent, to make, to create things which before had no existence? No—certainly not; no human creature can do this. All that the wisest have done, or can ever do, is to discover truths which *existed* before, but whose existence was not known. But when they have discovered these truths, (as they are called) and *shown* them to mankind, mankind is as well able to judge whether they be truths or not as those who discovered them. It is the office of a philosopher to dig as it were into the earth in search of treasures. But when he has found a treasure, and brought it out of the bowels of the earth, and placed it on its surface where all men can see it, then, in judging whether it be really and truly a treasure or not, I shall take the liberty of using my *own* senses, and not the senses of the philosopher who discovered it. And if a philosopher dig, and dig, and dig, and at last turn up a heavy something, and then desire me to behold and admire the fine brilliant ingot of pure gold which he has discovered—and if I look, and look, and look with all the eyes I have, but can see nothing but a great black cinder—shall I take the philosopher's word for it, and purchase it at his own price? or shall I trust to the opinion of my own senses, and persist in believing it a mere cinder?

B.

I am almost certain that you have now said more than you intended, and more than you can prove. You have said that the five senses are all that are necessary to understand the abstrusest philosophy when properly explained? This is most manifestly untrue. For has not a dog five senses? And are they not as acute and perfect as your own, and even more so?

A.

Indeed they are. But I have never said what you attribute to me. I said the five senses of a ploughman, not of a dog.

B.

But are not the senses of both the same? Does not a dog see, hear, smell, taste, and feel?

A.

Most true. But is there no other difference between the two animals? Can they both *talk*? Have they both the same number of articulate sounds? The same copious and varied form of language? If a dog happen to gnaw a particular herb, which afterwards gives him a pain in the bowels, can he go and tell other dogs not to do the same, because, if they do, it will poison them? I tell you that you have not yet the slightest conception how much of our boasted wisdom and superiority over other animals we owe solely to the faculty of speech. In my work on "Life, Health, and Disease," I have already insisted a good deal on this. But I was not then even myself fully aware how great, how stupendous is the debt which we owe to the organs of speech. When I come to explain to you the meaning of the word *thing*—the word *be*—the word *word*—and such words as *substance*, *essence*, *existence*, *being*—I tell you again you will be astonished to find how great is the *double* debt which we owe to the faculty of speech. I say the double debt, for there are two. The former is one of gratitude for the immeasurable superiority which it has given us over every other living thing. The latter is one of deep execration for the dark pyramid of misery which it has piled upon so many human hearts,—and for having planted, in the very centre of the green garden of God's beautiful earth, a upas-tree, whose poisonous branches extend into every corner, and whose leaves drop palsies into the breasts of



men. But I will lay a worm to its root—a worm that shall gnaw its fibres, and suck up its juices, and sap its strength, and poison the very life-springs of “this all-blasting tree;” and in the fulness of time its leaves and its branches shall wither and die, and the earth shall be no more overshadowed with its luxuriant horrors. For I am about to erect the temple, and to raise the altar, for which Locke cleared the ground, and Horne Tooke laid the foundation. And the temple shall be entered by five doors, and lighted by five windows, and its roof shall be supported by five columns. And round the altar shall stand five virgins arrayed in the purest white, with every one a crucible of pure gold in her hand. And the temple shall be called the temple of Knowledge, and the altar the altar of Speech. And every one who sacrifices in this temple, shall lay his offering on this altar. And no man’s offering shall be accepted, and placed in the treasure chamber of the temple, until it shall have been tried in the golden crucibles of the virgins. But let us return to Locke’s “origin of ideas.”

Locke divided all ideas into two great classes—viz. those which come to us through our senses, and those which we *get out of these* by reflection—or, as he elsewhere calls it, by the mind *bending back upon itself* in order to take a view of its own operations. In another place he explains this word reflection, by saying, that it, viz. the mind, “turns its view inward upon itself, observes its own actions, takes from thence *other ideas*, which are as capable to be the objects of its contemplation, as any of those it received from foreign things.” Elsewhere he likens the mind of a newly-born infant to a blank sheet of white paper, ready to receive the impressions to be presently made upon it by the external objects by which the child is surrounded. In the passage above, and in those others to which I have just alluded, Locke manifestly speaks of the *mind*, the *operations* of the *mind*, *ideas*, and *contemplation*, as four distinct and different things. Now I would be glad to know what is the nature of that mind which is wholly destitute of ideas—the mind for instance of an infant newly-born—or an hour, a day, a week, a month, *before* it is born? He speaks, too, of *contemplation* as a something distinct from ideas, but yet giving, or helping to give,

rise to ideas. Here is, first, a *mind*; secondly, a mind which *contemplates*; and thirdly, certain objects of that *contemplation*, viz. *ideas*. He speaks of the mind, too, first, as a blank sheet of paper, having nothing to do but passively to receive ideas. How can this blank sheet of paper *contemplate*? He then speaks of the mind as though it were an elastic body which can be "bent back upon itself." But even an elastic body cannot be bent back upon itself—but only one *part* of it can be bent back upon another *part*. Can the mind therefore be divided into parts? But he says it bends back, that is, reflects upon itself in order to take a view of the ideas which it has received from the senses, and that from this bending back it obtains *other* ideas, viz. those of *bending back*, or reflection. But is there then some one particular part of the mind which is the receptacle of ideas, and another particular part which has the power of seeing, or contemplating, or peeping into that other part which contains the ideas? He next speaks of the mind as of some hollow or solid body, for he says, "it turns its view *inward* upon itself." But even a solid body cannot be turned *inward upon itself*. A part of it, if it be not too hard, may be turned inward which before was outward, but it cannot be made to be *all inside*! He must mean, therefore, that a part of the mind (that part which has the power of contemplating) is turned inward towards that other part which holds the ideas! While Locke had truth and common sense on his side—that is, while he was proving that there can be no such things as innate, that is, inborn ideas, no one could write more intelligibly. A child or a ploughman may understand him. And this is always the case. If a man *understand himself* he never can possibly have the slightest difficulty in making others understand him. But the moment he quits the subject of innate ideas—the moment he quits the broad straight path of common sense, it is exceedingly amusing to observe how he flounders about, plunging at every step out of the mud into the mire; and every now and then stopping a moment to endeavour to wipe the slough from his feet, which has no other effect than that of transferring the mire from his feet to his hands. Had Locke been compelled to write in the *English* language—that is, had he been com-

pelled to use only English words so that nobody could mistake their meaning—had he been obliged to use the English word *back-bending*, instead of the Latin word *reflexion*; and the English word *through-taking* instead of the Latin word *perception*—and the English word *likeness* instead of the Greek word *idea*, he would not, he could not, *nobody* could, have written such intolerable trash as he began and continued to write the moment he had done with that part of his subject which he *understood*.

He speaks of pain, and pleasure, (which surely are sufficiently *real*) and power, and succession, as so many ideas. Afterwards he speaks of the *ideas* of these *ideas*. So that pain is but an idea—and the idea of pain is but the idea of an idea. But an idea is the likeness of something. Pain, therefore, according to Locke, is the likeness of a likeness which is like nothing; for if pain be but a likeness, what is it like? Again, he speaks of ideas, the understanding, and the mind, as three separate and distinct things. For he says, “the *mind* furnishes the *understanding* with *ideas* of its own operations.” How can there be a mind without an understanding, or an understanding without a mind? Or ideas without either? Are not the mind and the understanding the same thing? And if so, then the passage will run thus: “the *mind* furnishes the *mind* with ideas of the *mind’s* operations.”

But the matter stood thus. He undertook to explain the origin of ideas, after he had proved that they could not possibly come to us *before* we are born. The senses immediately offered themselves to his mind, as at least one source of a vast number of ideas. But then Locke found, in the language of his own country, and in all the other languages with which he was acquainted, such words as power, faith, discerning, judgment, reasoning, thinking, perception, &c. &c., and having imbibed the notion, from the older writers on language, that every noun was the sign or name of an idea; and seeing at once that these *supposed* ideas which he *supposed* to be represented by those words, could not have come to us either by the nose, the ears, the eyes, or the mouth; and yet feeling assured that they must have come to us by some means or other, since we are, as he *supposed*, in possession of them—what was he to do? He must find a source for those fancied ideas somewhere or other, by hook or by crook—so he thought of this word *reflection*. And



having accustomed himself to *talk* of the mind as a material substance, and connected it in his mind with the properties and qualities of material substances, and thus having, in his own mind, endowed it with the power of looking, and feeling, and bending, he continued to think of it as though the *mind* were really a living and thinking animal, and capable of looking into itself, as we are said to look into our own breasts, when we consult our own thoughts. Accustomed to consider man as consisting of two parts, mind and matter—and his thoughts being filled with these ideas when he was talking of the mind *alone*—about its *viewing*—its *looking* into itself—its *reflecting* upon its own operations, &c. &c., he totally forgot that though a man consists of two parts, the *mind* has but *one*, viz., *itself*. It is absurd, therefore, to talk of the mind viewing itself, as it would be to talk of an eye seeing itself. He, in fact, unwittingly compares the mind to that thinking compound called man, which is an absurd and impossible comparison.

First of all Locke makes the mind quite *passive*, as in the case of a newly-born infant, when he compares it to a sheet of paper. But by and bye he is obliged to make it *active*, otherwise he could not have found a source for those ideas which he calls ideas of reflection, because these, says he, result from the mind's own *actions* upon itself. But by and bye it becomes *passive* again. Why? Because it was necessary to the health of Locke's hypothesis that it should be so. But here, all at once, he seems to become conscious that he has, somehow or other, got into the mud. So he stops suddenly, and endeavours to clean his feet a little. "Though thinking," says he, "in the propriety of the English tongue" (just as though thinking was not the same all the world over, let the language or tongue be what it may) "signifies that *sort* of operation" (it has come, you see, from an operation to a *sort* of operation now) "of the mind about its ideas, wherein the mind is *active*: where it, with *some degree* of voluntary attention, considers anything. For in bare, *naked perception*," (what sort of thing is that?) "the mind is *for the most part*" (he seems loth to bring it out, but it must come) "*passive*."

In one place he calls perception an idea—in another place

a faculty. In one place he says, “we begin to have ideas when we begin to perceive;” but if perception be itself an idea, this is only to say that “we begin to have ideas when we begin to have ideas.” Again, he says, “but though these two later sorts of *qualities* are *powers* barely, and nothing but *powers*”—why he has told us a dozen of times that *quality* is an *idea*, and that *power* is an *idea*!—why does he insult us thus by telling us that an idea is an idea, and nothing but an idea? I will tell you why—simply because he did not know what he was talking about. And then he goes on to talk of resemblances, and primary qualities, and secondary qualities, and qualities immediately perceivable, and qualities mediately perceivable. He says again, “If any one ask me what this solidity is, I send him to his senses to inform him.” Ay, to be sure! But why did not Mr. Locke go to his own senses for information as to the meaning of all the other important words which he uses himself? They are excellent counsellors, these same five senses of ours, are seldom mistaken, and never lie if they know it. Why did not Locke ask his senses what is the meaning of the word space, for instance? or motion, or distance, or reflection? Why did he not ask his ear whether it could hear it, his eye whether it could see it, his nose whether it could smell, his tongue whether it could taste it? If they could not tell him what space is, they could and would have told what it is not.

Again, “These two, I say, viz. external, material things, as the objects of *sensation*, and the operations of our own minds within, as the objects of *reflection*, are, to me, the *only originals*, from whence *all our ideas* take their beginnings.” Is not this plain language? Can it be possibly mistaken?

B.

It seems to me perfectly plain.

A.

Yes—but this is not by any means the only passage in which he distinctly tells us that we have no one idea, of what kind soever, which does not come into the mind either by sensation or reflection. And yet, hear what he says in his first letter to the Bishop of Worcester. “*I never said that the general idea of substance comes in by sensation or reflection!*”

In another place, he says, "It is not in the power of the most exalted wit, or enlarged understanding, by any quickness or variety of thoughts, *to invent or frame one new single idea* in the mind, not taken in by the ways before mentioned"—that is, reflection or sensation. But hear him, in his letter to the Bishop. "General ideas," says Locke to the Bishop, "come not into the mind by sensation or reflection, but are the *creatures* or *inventions* of the understanding!" If these general ideas be only a combination of original simple ideas, how can they be creatures or inventions, either of the understanding or of anything else? And if they be not merely old, simple, original ideas, differently combined, then what becomes of Locke's assertion that we get no simple ideas but either through sensation or reflection, since a general idea is but a cluster of single ideas, as a constellation is a cluster of stars; and yet, according to Locke, "general ideas come not into the mind either by sensation or reflection." He flatly contradicts himself. It is really wonderful that Locke, who had so keen an eye to observe the verbal follies of others, should not have paid more attention to his own language. The Peripatetic philosophers defined the idea of light to be, "*the act of perspicuous, as far forth as perspicuous.*" Another definition of the same school is, "*the act of a being in power, as far forth as in power.*" Locke ridicules this unmeaning hocus-pocus language. "What more exquisite jargon could the wit of men invent," says he, "than these definitions?" Truly, it would be perhaps impossible to invent a jargon *more* exquisite, but Locke himself has equalled it, though he could not surpass it. For instance, hear him: "Nor will any one wonder that I say these *essences*, or *abstract ideas*, which are the *measures of name*, and the *boundaries of species*, are the *workmanship of the understanding.*" He then endeavours to show that there are two sorts of essences, and calls them, "the one real, the other nominal." Now if the word nominal mean anything at all, it means that that to which it is applied has no existence—except, as we say, in name. And the word *real*, if it mean anything, means *like a thing*, or *having the nature of a thing or things*. Here, therefore, we have an essence which is no essence, and an essence which is not an essence, but a substance. And



with regard to his “abstract ideas,” if the word abstract mean anything, it means *taken away*, and the phrase “abstract idea,” therefore, if it mean anything, must and can only mean an idea abstracted from, disconnected with everything—produced by no substance or thing—that is, a sign which is the sign of nothing—that is, no sign or idea at all. And these essences which are no essences, and these ideas which are no ideas, are the workmanship of the understanding !

But it is idle to pursue and hunt down more of these inanities. To unearth them all would occupy, I verily believe, four or five thick volumes. There is scarcely a paragraph in the whole book, (which contains more than seven hundred pages) which is not pregnant with a whole family of the most ugly, misshapen, and misbegotten absurdities—always excepting that part of his work in which he proves that no ideas can be innate, and those few pages devoted to the use, and abuse, and manner of signification, and vital importance, of words.

It is the same with all the others, from Plato and Aristotle, who wrote more than two thousand years ago, down to the metaphysical writers of the last century. If you have any question as to whether I have quoted and dealt fairly with Locke’s book, when we have finished our conversations, read it—that is, if you can. You will then, but not *till* then, be in a condition to detect these monstrosities at a glance—not only such as are contained in the Essay on the Human Understanding, but those also which disfigure the pages of all our philosophical writers, our essayists, our moralists, our politicians, our political economists, and our writers on the laws of nations.

Des Cartes, who overthrew the Platonic and Peripatetic systems, in order to erect one of his own, not less absurd, founded it entirely on these words: “*Cogito, ergo sum*”—that is: “*I think, therefore I am.*” He might just as well have said: “*I sneeze, therefore the kettle boils.*” For he did not know the meaning either of the word *think*, or the word *am*—or of their Latin, Greek, or French equivalents. To have known the meaning and true force of these words would have gone well-nigh, of itself, to overturn the whole fabric of his new system.

It seems to me that Locke, who was a very pious man, was puzzled how to account, if he made the senses the only inlets of knowledge, for that conviction, amounting to absolute certainty, which all men feel of the existence of a supreme, omniscient, all-powerful, intelligent Deity. I say all men—for I do not believe it possible to doubt it. I do not believe it possible to doubt the existence of one infinite being, supremely wise and good, any more than it is possible to doubt that a healthy eye sees, when its lids are open to the light. And it is true that all men form to themselves ideas of God, but those ideas are all necessarily only copies of ourselves. We necessarily do this, because we could not pray to him, we could not think of him, unless we formed some idea of him. We arrive at the idea of God by first contemplating the idea of man, and then, divesting this idea of its materiality, we endeavour to raise our thoughts as far as possible upward toward infinite wisdom and power. In a word, we invest our idea of intelligent man with the infinite attributes of the Almighty. We do this manifestly in the very language of our prayers when we beseech him to *hear* us, and to *look* down in mercy upon our helpless condition. In this language we plainly invest our idea of the Creator with the human organs of seeing and hearing. And we are justified in this, not only by necessity, but by the language of scripture everywhere, and by the words put into the mouth of Moses by God himself. But we do not really suppose these organs to form any part of the true idea of God, but we are compelled to use this language because we have no other. No human language can convey infinite ideas; and it is plain that no finite mind can contain an infinite idea. It seems to me that he must have an exceedingly limited and imperfect notion of the Deity—of that wonderful Being who “stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing”—of that incomprehensible Power of whom Zopher said: “It is higher than heaven, what canst thou do?—deeper than hell, what canst thou know?”—I say his notion of the boundless immensity of God’s greatness must be indeed very lame and imperfect, who thinks his own mind capable of containing its idea or representation. Indeed in another part of Locke’s book, he himself

falls into this same strain of argument. The conviction of the existence of a God is an irresistible conviction—and arises from that division of sensation which I shall designate internal sensation or instinct—and which Aristotle beautifully calls the “divinity which stirs within us;” and which in another place he says, “is not reason, but something better.”

It is manifestly impossible that we can have any ideas, or any species of knowledge whatever, excepting what we derive from our senses only. Locke himself says that we get both our ideas of sensation and reflection from experience; and what experience we can have excepting by our senses I am wholly at a loss to conceive. The Rev. Thomas Reid, doctor of divinity, and formerly professor of moral philosophy in the University of Glasgow, says, in his “Enquiry into the Human Mind,” that Locke’s hypothesis of ideas of reflection derived from previous ideas of sensation, is contrary to all the rules of logic. But I say it is contrary to common sense. Suppose Locke had in his mind the ideas of a horse and an elephant. He might chop these ideas into twenty pieces, mix them together, and then reunite them so as to form a monster never before recognized by mortal ken. But what then? Would not every part of this monstrous idea have been nevertheless derived from the several parts of the horse and the elephant, which were themselves derived from the sense of sight? He might put the ideal horse’s head upon the neck of the ideal elephant, but the idea of the horse’s head would still have been derived from the sense of sight, as well as the neck and carcase of the elephant. You cannot by any possible magic of the mind, nor can a madman, nor can he who dreams, get an instant’s glimpse of any one thing, the likeness of the several parts of which you or they have not seen before. Shakespeare, of whom it has been said, that he first exhausted worlds, and then invented new, and who could have created a new idea, if anybody could, found it nevertheless wholly impracticable. Accordingly we see his Caliban, his Sycorax, his Ariel, his Weird Sisters, his Oberon, and Titania, are, after all, only so many men and women, varying in shape and character, and endowed with fanciful attributes, but still only distorted copies of humanity. The



same thing holds equally true of the other senses, and only requires the exercise of common sense to become apparent.

I assert, therefore, that when Locke proved that there are no such things as inborn ideas—which, after all, is only the same thing as proving that there are no ideas in us *before* we are born—he did, in fact, prove, with equal truth and force, that we derive all our ideas through the organs of the senses solely. For there are but two worlds—the world within, and the world without—the world of external things, and the world of our own sensations. And whatever, at any time, is not in the one, but which is afterward acquired, it must, of absolute necessity, come from the other—since man can create nothing—not even an idea. And if it be true that whatever is in the one must come from the other, by what other portal than those of the senses can it possibly find entrance? There is but one—the interposition of a miracle. But suppose—if it be possible to suppose an impossible thing—suppose, I say, that man could create a new idea—an idea that is the representative of nothing existing in the external world of things. Then, since it is the representative of nothing—the sign of nothing—*cui bono*? To what purpose was it created? Again, if none of our senses can take cognizance of it, how are we to know that we have it? How are we to become SENSIBLE that it is in us? It might as well have never been created.

I have said that there can be but two worlds—the world of our own sensations, and the world of everything else besides. I now say that all we know of the things composing the latter is, that we can (what we call) see them, feel them, hear them, taste them, or smell them. All we know of the things composing the former—that is, the world of sensations—is, that we can (what we call) remember them. All human knowledge, therefore, resolves itself into seeing, feeling, hearing, tasting, smelling, and remembering. All the rest is belief, and resolves itself into that which we believe, but do not know.

Now then if all human knowledge consist in seeing, feeling, hearing, tasting, smelling, and remembering, it follows of course that all the words that are necessary for the communication of knowledge, are such words only as stand in men's minds as the

signs of the things which we see, feel, hear, taste, smell, or remember. And that, if there be in any language whatever, any other words—that is, words which do *not* stand as the signs of any of these things—all such words, not being the signs of anything that we know, must either be mere empty noises signifying nothing, and having, therefore, nothing to do in the communication of knowledge, or else they must be *indirect* signs of these things—abbreviated forms of speech—words which stand as the signs of *other* words, which *other* words are the *direct* signs of the things which we see, feel, hear, taste, smell, or remember.

I think I can make this still clearer, by viewing the argument more in the little. Suppose we had but one sense—the sense of seeing. And suppose everything else in the universe consisted of but one object. Then I say all that we should know would be that we saw that object. And all the words that would be necessary to communicate that knowledge to another, would be the one word which mankind had agreed should stand as the sign or name of that one object. And that, however numerous the words of our language might be, they would all come within one or other of two classes—that is, words signifying nothing, or words which, either directly or indirectly, signified that one object. For, it must be remembered, that although words are *instruments* used in the communication of knowledge, yet they do not themselves actually convey into another's mind ideas which were not there before. All they do, as I have said before, is this—they bring under a man's immediate notice and attention certain ideas which were lying dormant in his mind before—differently arranged, if you will, but still there. For it is manifest, that if I have in me the idea of a fragrance which I have once smelled, but which you have never smelled, nor anything in the slightest degree resembling it—I say, it is manifest, that no word in any language has the power of putting the idea of that fragrance into you. And so of the ideas of visible objects—the arrangement of the different parts—that is, the different ideas composing the whole group—may be such as you have never seen. But the several separate ideas must manifestly have been in you before. I may by

words convey into your mind the idea, as it is called, (but *group* of ideas, as it really is) of such a human being as was never seen by any one—the idea of a man with his legs where his arms should be, and his head put on the wrong way upwards. But I could not convey this into your mind by means of words, if all the separate ideas of head, legs, arms, &c. had not been in your mind before.

Since, then, all knowledge resolves itself into seeing, feeling, hearing, tasting, smelling, or remembering—and since words can be only useful for the purpose of recalling to the mind of the hearer something which he has seen, felt, heard, tasted, or smelled, but can put no idea into the mind which was not there before, it follows that all words, that are anything more than mere idle noises, must either directly or indirectly, signify some one or other of the things which have been seen, felt, &c. &c. Since, if they do not signify any of these, they must manifestly signify nothing, there being nothing else to be signified.

B.

If it be true, that all human knowledge does indeed resolve itself into seeing, feeling, &c. &c.; then I see clearly enough that what you have stated must follow as an absolutely necessary consequence. But it seems to me that your account of human knowledge will apply just as well to brute knowledge. For a monkey can see, hear, feel, taste, smell, and remember, as well as a man.

A.

No—he cannot remember so well. But he *can* remember, nevertheless, though not so well—or rather, not for so long a time.

B.

But he can see, hear, feel, smell, and taste, as well, if not better.

A.

And what can you do more? I will tell you—you can talk. You can give names to the things which you see, feel, hear, taste, smell, and remember.

B.

And is this absolutely all?



A.

Absolutely. "Ignorance," says a wise and truthful aphorism, "ignorance lies at the bottom of all our knowledge, and the deeper we dig, the nearer we come to it."

B.

What knows a dog of cause and effect?

A.

He knows that effects are produced by causes, and that like causes will produce like effects—or rather he knows, that is, remembers, that they have done so, and he *believes* that they will continue to do so. What know you beyond this? I have heard you laugh scores of times to see both the dog and cat scampering down stairs, or up stairs, out of the kitchen, as though they were mad, the moment the voice of the cat's-meat man is heard coming round the square, and most impatiently waiting at the street door till his arrival. They know that that voice, at that particular time of the day, has been always followed by a supply of food, and they *believe* that the same effect will continue to follow. When your house dog hears, in the dead of night, a footstep approaching the house, he sets up a furious barking, because he believes that noise (the sound of the foot-fall,) would not be produced unless it were *caused* by the approach of some person. He does not bark at the sound of the wind, nor at the falling of a brick from the house-top near his kennel. Nor does he bark if the strange foot-fall be accompanied by the voice of his master. If I call him to me, he comes bounding joyously toward me; but if I rub his nose with snuff, he will not come to me again, though I call him never so coaxingly, until he has forgotten the circumstance. And then, if it be not too long afterward, if I show him the box out of which he saw me take the snuff, he will grin and sidle away—knowing that what I took out of that box was the *cause* of the painful *effects* produced in his olfactory nerves, and that if he do not keep out of the way of the same *cause*, the same *effects* will be produced again.

B.

But is not this what we call instinct?

A.

I do not care what you call it—call it by what name you

please—only by whatever name you call it in the dog, by that name I shall call it in the man. You will please to remember that long as I have dwelt upon, and much as I have said about, the importance of words, I have all along pressed it upon you that they are only important as being the representatives of things, or ideas of things—as bank notes are only valuable as being the representatives of gold.

B.

You have told me that all we can see is colored light. Can a dog know this?

A.

No—I have never said that a dog or a monkey knows, or can know, as much as a man; because, though he can see what he sees as well, that is, as distinctly, as a man, he has not the means or the opportunity of seeing so *many things*. And because he cannot talk, neither can he reason. For in order to reason about things, it is absolutely necessary first to give them names. We cannot reason, nor think connectedly of several things, without having first given them names. It is impossible. For reasoning is but silent, internal talking—a talking, as it were, with the ideas of words, instead of with words themselves. As this adventitious use of words, therefore, enables us to reason, so reasoning does, by virtue of what we call association, suggest to the mind the possible existence of things which we have yet neither seen, felt, &c. We are thus led to search and inquire after them, and in the search, accident presents us with things, and discovers to us existences of which we should otherwise have never dreamed. The formation of the hand, too, that beautiful and wonderful instrument, enables us to prosecute our inquiries further than it would be possible for any other animal to do. And thus it is that innumerable things are presented to our eyes, and ears, and other organs, which never do come under the notice of a dog. But I suppose that, if you allow a dog to use your hands—that is, if in the prosecution of your inquiries, say, for instance, in chemical analysis, you do the reasoning, (which the dog cannot do, because he cannot talk) and working part, (which the dog cannot do, because he has no hands)—and then show him, the dog, the result—I say, if you

do this, then the dog will know that result, as long as he can remember it, as well as you. That is, he can see it—but he cannot give it a name—and therefore cannot talk about it—and therefore cannot reason about it, or think about it—and *therefore* will almost instantly forget that he has seen it. When you are looking at it—suppose it be the result of Sir H. Davy's wonderful experiments, the metal called potassium—while you are looking at this result—this brilliant metal—this potassium, all you know by that act of vision is that you see it, and the dog knows this too. But the dog cannot give it a name, and you can. The dog, therefore, immediately forgets it, when it has been removed from his sight. You, on the contrary, having given it a name, go on talking and reasoning about it, which talking and reasoning lead you and others to the performance of similar experiments. And while you are looking, on some other occasion, for this potassium, you discover something else, to which also you give a name. And thus it is that the simple power of giving names to things leads you to the discovery of multitudes of others, which otherwise you could never have imagined. But all this is manifestly the result of speech, and speech alone. But when you have discovered all, still the whole amount of your knowledge is that you can see, feel, hear, taste, or smell, and remember the things which you have discovered. Beyond this, they still remain unknown things. For it is the sensations produced by them which alone you know; and they are equally capable of exciting the same sensations in a dog or a monkey.

Thus the impossibility of making a dog comprehend that all which he sees is only colored light, is caused by his inability to reason—and his inability to reason is the necessary consequence of his inability to give names to things; and *not* from the want of any *source of ideas* which we have, and he does not possess.

B.

How can these things be so, when all the hypotheses—

A.

Is it true?

B.

But it is totally irreconcilable with —



A.

Is it true?

B.

According to this the difference between —

A.

Is it true? — that is the only question with which we have any concern. It is only a waste of time to go in search of one hypothesis to batter down another. The only question worth answering is: "is it true?" If it be false, show me that it is so, and it will be instantly scattered to the winds without the aid of any other opinion or hypothesis whatever. And if it be true, why then nothing on earth can make it false. Not all the hypotheses that ever were hatched from the eggs of that bird of ill-omen, human opinion, can alter or shake it, or in any way disturb it. But it may not be true—and I only say that if it be false, show me that it is so. But this cannot be done by measuring it by another equally fallible hypothesis. It can only be effected by measuring it by the standard of truth—that is, the standard of the nature of things.

B.

If this be true, it teaches an humiliating lesson to human nature.

A.

I do not think so. Our superiority over the brute is not the less because we owe it to those curious little organs, the organs of speech! God's wondrous works are not the less wondrous because effected by simple contrivances. On the contrary, they only become, to thinking men, so much the more astonishing.

B.

But a thought has just occurred to me, which seems to prove that something more was required in order to realize our superiority over the brute, besides the organs of speech. For if a dog only wants the organs of speech to become as knowing as man, then a man who is without the faculty of speech should be no more knowing than a dog. But this is not so. For you may teach a deaf and dumb boy what you could never teach a dog or a monkey.

A.

That is quite true, and I have never said that it is not so.

On the contrary, I have expressly said that the peculiar organization of the hand greatly contributes to his acquisition of knowledge—knowledge which, for want of the hand, the dog could never acquire, even if he had the use of words. God designed that man should speak. He gave him the faculty of speech that he might acquire a degree of knowledge which should place him almost infinitely above the brute. But if he had given man this power of acquiring knowledge, without the instruments necessary to make that power available, he would have frustrated his own design, and might just as well have withheld the power itself. If, for instance, he had terminated the arms of man by extremities resembling the foot of the elephant, the faculty of speech would have been of but little use. The door of many of the arts and sciences would have been closed to him—for instance, all those requiring the use of very delicate and minute tools, as, for example, the surgical operations for cataract. In the first place, he could never make the tools, and in the second, he could never use them if he had them. Along with the *power*, therefore, the Creator has bestowed on us an organization expressly adapted to the purpose of making that power available. Along with the power of speaking he has given us the means necessary to *apply* that power, so as to accomplish his own design, viz. of enabling us to acquire a much more multiplied knowledge than can be acquired by brutes. If he had given us the faculty of speech, and along with it the organization of an oyster, of what use would have been the faculty of speech? An oyster would be but little benefited by being enabled to talk. And as of the external organization, so of the internal—the organization of the brain. This, too, like that of the hands, has been adapted for the use of a being destined to speak. But all these differences are clearly differences in formation—in organization only—not in nature or kind. Surely it will be allowed that there is scarcely more difference between the intellect of an elephant and that of an idiot, or Cretin of the Valais, than there is between the intellect of an idiot and that of such men as Shakespere, Newton, Davy, Scott—a Pitt, a Fox, or a Sheridan. Yet in this latter instance, I suppose all will allow that the differ-

ence can only be one of organization and quantity—not of source or quality. For the quality and source of what the idiot really does know are the same, whether *that portion of knowledge* exists in the mind of Shakespere, or in the mind of an idiot. For instance, an idiot knows that he cannot thrust his hand through the window without breaking the glass and hurting his hand. And I say the quality and source of this isolated piece of knowledge are the same, whether that knowledge exists in the mind of an idiot, or of a philosopher.

Everybody knows that there are persons whom no efforts, and no kind of education, can ever make musicians. But there is, residing in the square in which I live, a youth barely thirteen years of age, whose musical talents are perfectly astonishing. The moment this youth's hands are placed upon the finger-board of the piano-forte, the whole instrument seems alive. The keys seem to know him—they seem to obey the wishes of his mind rather than the touches of his fingers, so wonderfully rapid are the movements. While the tones escaping from the excited instrument, like flashes of electricity from excited bodies, seem mad with joy, and hurry through the air, laughing and singing, like imprisoned spirits suddenly set free. Yet amid all this appearance of wildness and confusion, this musical delirium, there is the most perfect order—the most faultless harmony. The great Mocheles himself, whose whole life has been devoted to music, has not disdained to play in concert, and in public too, with this mere child. Yet, beyond some slight modification in the structure of this boy's brain and organs of hearing, no one, I presume, will contend that there is any fundamental difference between him and others. Neither, with regard to the sources of ideas, is there any fundamental difference between man and the animals next below him.

I set out by observing that we receive all our knowledge through the organs of the senses, and I have adopted this line of argument to show you that the difference between the knowledge of brutes (who cannot be supposed to have any other source than their senses) and human knowledge, is one, not of kind, species, or source—but simply and solely of degree or amount, and that the *sources* of knowledge in both are the same—viz. the



organs of the senses. I wish to show you that a slight alteration in the organization of a monkey's brain—an alteration which should do *no more* than merely enable it to retain a greater multitude of ideas—I mean of ideas to be *solely acquired through his senses*—is all that is required to enable him to reach a degree and an amount of knowledge in all respects equal to that of man, provided you supply him with a *hand*, and the faculty of speech.

B.

But is not this pretty much the same as saying, that if you first convert a monkey into a man, you will *then* make him as wise as a man?

A.

No—by no means. For in the imagined alterations I have not supposed any *new source* of ideas—I have not demanded for him any other source than those he has now—I have only said, “make such alterations in the organization of his brain, as shall enable him to take advantage of that additional host of ideas, which the gift of speech and a human hand would enable him to acquire through those organs of sense which he *already possesses*.” Thus proving that if these organs (with the supposed alterations of structure which he has not, but which man has) be all that is required to enable him to rival man in knowledge, they (these organs of the senses) must be all that is necessary to account for the superior knowledge of man himself. The organs of sense are manifestly designed for the *sole purpose* of receiving knowledge, since they answer no other end; and when accident or disease unfits any one of them for this purpose, it becomes totally useless, and one of the doors of knowledge is closed to us for ever. They establish the necessary relation between man and the things wherewith he is surrounded. They are the links which connect him with the external world. They enable him to support himself in his place, and (together with the faculty of speech) to reach and maintain his position as the crowning summit of the inverted pyramid of animal existences. In a word, they enable him to fulfil all the offices of life, and (together with the faculty of speech) all the purposes, from the first to the final cause, of his creation. They are necessary, and

*all* that is necessary to the existence and well-being of man. It is not necessary (even if it were possible) to imagine any other source of ideas. They are of themselves sufficient; and therefore it is idle to imagine others. And all those words, to account for which Locke invented his ideas of reflexion, his complex ideas, &c., can be more rationally, and more satisfactorily, and much more easily explained by other means. While all those wild reveries and fanciful theories with which the Platonists and Peripatetics of old, and the Cartesians and modern Pyrrhonists of later days have amused, and puzzled, and confounded the common sense of mankind, without convincing it, can, by the same means, be readily exposed, explained and exploded.

B.

But may not this very superiority of the human structure itself be considered as another source of ideas?

A.

As well might you say that the spade which digs a well is the source of the waters which fill it. Can you call the hand a source of ideas?—an inlet of knowledge?—a channel through which ideas enter the mind? Manifestly not. It is, like the spade, a mere tool which its possessor uses to bring hidden things within the reach of the senses. If the senses were all shut up, what knowledge could enter the mind through the hand? As of the configuration of the hand, so of the configuration of the brain. As the hand is no more than an instrument used for the purpose of bringing hidden things within reach of the senses, so the brain is only an instrument whose use is to receive and retain those ideas which have been introduced into it by the senses, let its configuration be what it may. For if the brain could originate ideas, then it would be possible to conceive that a man could have ideas and a memory, who could nevertheless neither see, hear, taste, smell, nor *feel*. But to conceive this seems totally impossible.

B.

Well, let us suppose for the present that all this is so. I should now be very glad if you would fulfil your promise and make me as thoroughly acquainted with the nature of an idea as I am with the nature of the poker and tongs.

A.

I am quite ready now to redeem that promise. First, therefore, let me ascertain what is the amount of your knowledge about this same poker. What is a poker?

B.

An instrument to stir the fire with.

A.

Very true. But I did not ask you what is the *use* of a poker, neither had I any objection to its original name of "poker," and, therefore, I cannot see why you should think it necessary to discard this old name and substitute the new one of "instrument." However, if you like the new name better than the old one, I cannot object to it. Now, therefore, be good enough to tell me what is this instrument whose *use* is to stir the fire?

B.

What is it? Why, it is a long slender bar of iron.

A.

Another new name! First it was a poker, then it was an instrument, and now it is a "bar of iron," whose shape is "long and slender." But I did not ask you of what *shape* the poker is! I ask for an egg, and you give me a stone. I ask for cash payment, and you give me paper. I ask for the meaning of a name, and you only give me another name. But never mind, your stock of names will be exhausted presently. I still, therefore, want to know what is this poker, this "instrument," whose *use* is to stir the fire, this "iron-bar," whose shape is "long and slender"?

B.

It is a metallic substance—a metal which we call iron.

A.

You die very hard, but you must die. What is this metal?

B.

It is obtained from —

A.

I don't want to know whence it is obtained! I only want to know what it is.

B.

Well then—all I can say more about it is, that it is one of the forms of matter.



A.

Very good. Now, then, what is matter ?

B.

Matter is that of which the universe —

A.

Stop a minute. You say “matter is that”—I want to know that *what*. What do you mean by *that* ?

B.

Why *that something or other* of which the universe —

A.

That will do. If you were a witness, and I the cross-examining counsel, I should say, “You may stand down, sir—that is my case, my Lord.” And so, all you can tell me of the nature of a poker is, after all, that it is something or other—or, in one word, that it is a *thing* ! It should seem, therefore, if we can but find out the meaning of this word *thing*, we shall arrive at the root of the matter. For this word appears to be the nut which contains the kernel of which we are in search—the casket in which the secret is locked up. It is an exceedingly curious word. We can scarcely utter a sentence without its assistance, expressed or understood. For in such ordinary phrases as “What have you got there ?” “What is there in that box ?” “What news this morning ?” This word *thing* is understood. *Thing* is the name of every *thing*. There is no *thing* which is not some *thing*. Every *thing* is a *thing*. What is matter ? Matter is the name which we give to all those *things* which compose the substantial universe. And what are *things* ? Why, *things* are those *things* which we have agreed to call *things*. What an absurd jargon ! and yet this is the language which we are using every day. Only we endeavour to conceal the absurdity even from ourselves by avoiding the repetition of the word *thing*, and substituting some other word in its place, which, for the time, signifies the same *thing*. And thus it is that we cheat ourselves. Because we have satisfied the *ear*, we *fancy* we have satisfied the *understanding*. Thus, in answer to the question, “What are things ?” a man would be ashamed to say, “things are the things which we call things.” But he would not be at all ashamed to say, “things are the materials of which the

universe is composed.” Yet there is not an atom of difference in the sense of the two sentences. For, if you ask him what he means by the words “materials” and “universe,” after ringing the changes upon some half dozen of names, he must end at last by calling them also by the name of things. But by using the words “materials” and “universe,” he avoids the disagreeable repetition of the word *thing*, which, if not avoided, would infallibly hint to him that he was talking nonsense. But we do not like to have it hinted to us that we talk nonsense—no, not even by our own understanding. So we escape from this disagreeable hint by avoiding the disagreeable repetition, and thus, having lulled our understanding to sleep, fancy we talk excellent sense, when, in fact, the sense or nonsense remains precisely the same, only being expressed in different words.

The word *thing* signifies *speech*. In the Friesic dialect it is *ding*, *dinge*, and *thing*. In Low Dutch and German it is spelled *ding*. In Tatian’s Harmony of the Gospels, in Low German, A. D. about 890—in Notker’s Translation of the Psalms into Alemannic, A. D. about 1020—in Willeram’s Paraphrase of the Canticle, in Francic, A. D. about 1070—*thing*, *ting*, and *ding*, are all used to signify a discourse, a word, an agreement, a controversy. In its *secondary* use it signifies a judicial pleading, or law-suit. The Anglo-Saxon word *thing-ian* signifies to address, to speak; as, “to Gode *thingian*,” to pray to God, that is, to address one’s self, in the language of prayer, to God. “Butan he *thingian* wille,” except he will ask forgiveness. In Friesic, *thingie* means to plead at the bar—that is, to speak in favour of some one at the bar. The Anglo-Saxon word *thing-ere*, means a pleader, or plead-man, one who pleads, that is, who speaks in favour of another; and *cyre-thing-ere* means a church-speaker, i. e. a preacher. It (*thingere*) also means an orator, that is, a speaker. In modern German, *dingen* means to higggle, to cheapen, to bandy words, as people do when they are making a bargain. In old German, *thingon*, *dingon*, *githingon*, (all manifestly the same words) meant to speak—to plead at the bar. In the Latin of the middle ages, *thing-are* meant to promise. In Danish *tinge* means to higggle, as in making a bargain. In Swedish *tinga* means to bespeak. In Icelandic *thinga* means to deliberate,

that is, to converse with one's own thoughts. In English, to *ding* means to bluster—to huff—"He huffs and *dings* at such a rate, because we will not spend the little we have left to get him the title and estate of Lord Strut."—*Arbuthnot's History of John Bull*. This word is in frequent use at the present day with the common people of England, in such expressions as this: "She dings it into my ears from morning till night."

The Anglo-Saxon word *gild* means a payment of money; it was also used to signify a society or club, in which payments of money were made for mutual support. Thus the same word was used, first, to signify the thing paid, and afterwards it was applied to designate those who paid it. This transference of the meaning of a word from one thing, to some other thing closely connected with it, is exceedingly common. Our word parliament comes from the French word *parler*, which signifies speech, language, talk, and signifies therefore the *talking assembly*—or from the verb *parler*, to speak, to talk. But we lose sight of the idea of talking, (although that is the only idea the word can possibly signify) and, as we use it in ordinary conversation, we have only the idea of an assembly of men. But, unless these men met for the purpose of *talking*, they could no more be called a parliament than could an assembly of dumb animals. The propriety of the term depends entirely upon the fact of their meeting for the purpose of *speaking*. The word *thing*, which like the word *parler* signifies speech, is accordingly used in the same manner to designate an assembly of men whose business is to speak. And, therefore, the present Norwegian parliament is called the *Stor-thing*, that is, the great *speaking*-assembly—literally the *great talk*. For two or three hundred years previously to the year 1275, (when it became subject to Norway) Iceland had a parliament, and they called it *Althing*—that is, *all-thing*, or *all-talk*, because all freeholders had a right to *speak* in it. In Icelandic, *thingi* means a conversation or dialogue. The words *thing*, *ding*, *ting*, spelled as they were differently pronounced by different northern nations, also meant a council. But this is evidently only the *secondary* meaning. A council is only called a *thing*, because the sole business of a council is to *talk*, just as the word *gild*, whose primary meaning is a *payment*



of money, was also used to signify *those who meet to pay the money*. Precisely for the same reason, it (the word *thing*) was used to designate a law-suit, a court of justice, a judgment, an agreement, a controversy, a consultation, a higgling, a promising, a supplication, an intercession, a mediator, a pleader—anything, in fact, necessarily involving the idea of *talking* as the principal object. As the original meaning of the word began to be gradually forgotten, it was used in a still wider sense. It then began to be used to signify any kind of business whatever, just as we now use the words *business, affairs, concerns, &c.*, when we say, “I have got some business to transact”—“I have an affair to settle”—“That is my concern, not yours.” But in almost all these uses of the words *business, affair, concern*, there is still preserved some notion of talking. For when the affair, or business, has nothing to do with talking, we do not use these words, but substitute the word *work*. “I have got some work to do,” we say—or, “I have something to do first, and then I will go with you.” We do not generally, in these cases, say, “I have some *business to settle*.”

As the Anglo-Saxon verb *thingian*, therefore, means *to speak*, so the Anglo-Saxon noun *thing*, still preserved in modern English, signifies *speech*, or that which is *spoken*, and was so used by our forefathers, and is, though we know it not, still used every day by us, in the self-same sense.

Now whatever is spoken, that is *speech*; and speech is whatever is spoken. But to speak of a thing is to give it a *name*. We cannot speak of anything without giving it a name—without *calling* it something or other. To *speak* of a thing, and to *call* it by name, or to *name* it, are therefore precisely equivalent phrases; and any word which is equivalent to any one of them, must, therefore, also be equivalent to the others, since things which are equal to the same, are equal to one another.

I have said that when we wish to convert a noun into a verb, we do so by prefixing the word *to*. Thus, out of the noun *noise*, we get the verb *to noise*, as in the following passage: “He has deserted our party, and has threatened *to noise* it abroad that we meet in secret.” The Anglo-Saxons performed the same operation by post-fixing, generally, *ian, an, or gan*.

And thus, I believe, they got the verb *thing-ian*, to speak, out of the noun *thing*, speech, just as we get the verb *to noise* out of the noun *noise*—and just as they got the verb *sprec-an*, to speak, out of the noun *sprec*, speech—and just as we, in fact, get our verb *to speak* out of the noun *speech*, which ought to be pronounced *speek*, seeing that the *ch* is but a comparatively modern substitution for the Anglo-Saxon *c*, (which was always hard, like *k*,) or the Icelandic (that is, old Danish) *k*. It is just as correct, therefore, to say *to speech*, as it is to say *to speak*—and equally so, to say *a speak*, as to say *a speech*—for the only difference between the two words is a slight comparatively modern corruption in the spelling; and the verb is merely the noun with the prefix *to* before it. Our word *beseech* was anciently pronounced and written *beseke*. It was so written by Lord Burleigh, so lately as the reign of Elizabeth: “Yet were I also unnatural if I should not take comfort thereby, and to *beseke* Almighty God to bless you with supply of such blessings as I cannot in this infirmity yield you.”—*Wright’s Private Correspondence of the Lord Treasurer Burghley*.

Perhaps the word *speak* comes originally from the Icelandic *spekia*, which signifies wisdom; but whose *primitive* meaning must manifestly have been *speech*.

The Anglo-Saxon noun *thing*, therefore, stands in the same relation to their verb *thingian*, as our noun *noise* stands to the verb *to noise*, and as our noun *speech* stands to our verb *to speak*. Now the verb has been very properly defined to be “that which we speak,” while the noun is “that *about which* we speak.” As *thingian*, therefore, signifies the *act of speaking*, so *thing* signifies that *about which* we speak—in common language, that which we talk about—that which we name, or call by name—in one word, *named*. And when we use the expression, “*the things*,” it is exactly the same as though we said “*the named*.” And this brings me to the every-day signification, and to the every-day use of the word *thing*. When you ask me the question: “what is a chair?” After having told you the *uses* of a chair, the *shape* of a chair, and how it is made; in a word, after having enumerated all the accidents *belonging to* a chair—after having told you what are the *effects* of a chair upon my

organs of sense—your question still remains unanswered. If then you press me farther, all I can tell you is that it is “that which we talk about”—“that which we have given a name to”—it is “a spoken of”—“a named”—in one word, “*a thing*.” And the direct answer to your question, “what is a chair?” and the only direct answer which any human being can give is this: “a chair is that which we call a chair.” And thus the very nature of human speech defines the limits of human knowledge. We know nothing whatever of causes—we are only conversant with effects. The chair is a cause producing certain effects upon my organs of sense. I know the effects, because I can see and feel them, but I know nothing whatever of the cause, because I can neither see it nor feel it; for the effects which I *can* see and feel, and which we call sensations, are *in me* and not *in the chair*. And after having detailed to you the *accidents pertaining* to a chair, all I can do more is to tell you its name.

This word *thing* offers a beautiful illustration of what I have so often said, viz. that there is always some kind of connexion between the word and its meaning—some reason why a particular word was used to designate some one particular thing and no other. There is no other word in the language which could supply the place of this word *thing*, unless it were some word having an equivalent meaning. It seems to be the only word which can possibly apply to all things equally well. There are many things which we can see, but cannot hear. There are many things which we can hear, but cannot see. There are many things which we can feel, but can neither see nor hear, as, for instance, odors and flavors. But there is *no* thing which we cannot talk about—and therefore a word signifying “that which we can talk about” is one of universal application, and exactly suited for the office it fulfils in language.

The word *thing*, therefore, in all our reasonings, is used precisely as the algebraist uses certain letters. When he is in search of an unknown quantity, he sets down a certain letter, and calls it the sign or name of the unknown quantity. He then goes on reasoning about this same letter as though it were the actual quantity sought. But it is manifest that until this



unknown quantity is found, and so becomes a *known* quantity, this letter is, in reality, the sign of nothing at all; but is merely a tool necessarily used for the purpose of reasoning. If he succeed in finding the unknown quantity, the letter becomes the sign of something which is known. He then knows what the letter means. But until he has converted the unknown quantity into a *known* quantity, the letter is the sign of nothing, and is but to reasoning what the tongue is to talking, simply a necessary tool. So this word *thing* is only used as an algebraic sign to enable us to reason. It is a mere peg whereon to hang our talk. This word *thing*, like hundreds of others in daily use, is merely the sign of an unknown something. But if I ask you what is the meaning of any one of these words—these algebraic signs of unknown somethings—then you are bound, like the algebraist, to convert these *unknown* somethings into *known* somethings. You are bound to show me, that is, to place within the cognizance of one or more of my senses, that something which was intended to be represented by the word in question; or else to translate the word into other words whose meaning I understand. When you have done this, your word has a meaning—but *until* you have done this, it is no more than a mere sign signifying nothing—or, which is the same thing, signifying that which is unknown—and is no more capable of conveying knowledge than are the  $x$ ,  $y$ ,  $z$  of the algebraist. The same is true of all those words said to be the signs of abstract ideas.

In the Latin language, the word which is equivalent to *thing* in English, is *res*. This word, like *thing*, was also used to signify any business or affair—also, a lawsuit—and was of universal application as we now apply the word *thing*—and, like it, it means *speech*—being derived directly from the Greek word *res-is*, which signifies *speech*.

The Greeks used the word *chrema* as an equivalent for our word *thing*. *Chrema* is derived from *chrao*, which was used to signify to *deliver an oracular response*, and to *chresthen* meant *that which was spoken by an oracle*, and “*chresthai to manteio*” signified to *consult an oracle*. *Chrema* was also used to signify any affair or business, and out of this word they made another, viz. *chrematizo*, which meant to transact public business, to give

decisions, to issue edicts, &c.—also to consult, to confer with, to discuss, and to deliver an oracle. In all these uses of *chrema*, and of the words related to it, there is evidently involved the idea of speaking.

The necessity of some such word as *thing*, signifying speech, or “that which we talk about,” is strongly evinced by a foreigner, who very imperfectly understands our language. You will observe him, every now and then, when he does not recollect the English word which he requires, making use of the phrase “what you call”—and then he stops. He uses this phrase, as we use the word *thing*, as a general term for everything whose *particular* name he has forgotten. But a single word is much more convenient than a phrase, and therefore we use the single word *thing*, instead of the phrases, “what we call,” or, “that which is named.” It is precisely for the same reason—one of convenience—that the algebraist uses a letter. He might, in his reasonings, use the phrase “unknown quantity.” But this would occupy more room on his paper, and be very inconvenient in other respects. He therefore substitutes a single letter, never forgetting, however, that that letter is but the sign of the words “unknown quantity.” The common people of England, however, even at the present day, do not always use this word *thing*, but the very phrases of which I have said it is the sign. They frequently say, “bring me my what d’ye call it,” and other similar expressions. And it is to uneducated people that we must look, if we would clearly understand the *natural uses* of speech, and the *natural structure* of language; for they have nothing to guide them but nature.

As, then, all we know of external things is that they can produce in us what we call sensations, so all we know of these sensations is that we can what we call remember them; and these remembered sensations are what have been very vaguely and improperly called ideas. I know of no other ideas than these. Nor can I conceive any others. Nor can I conceive any source from which any other ideas than these can be derived.

What have been called ideas, therefore, I call *remembered sensations*. Not that it is a matter of any consequence by what term they are designated, so long as the term be clearly *under-*

*stood by everybody*, which is not so with the word *idea*. The word *idea* can be applied with no shadow of propriety to any other sensations than those which have been impressed upon our organs by visible objects, since the word means, and can only mean, that which we can see, or seem to see. But the ideas which we derive from visible objects, can with great propriety be called *sensations*, since they are derived to us through one of our organs of *sense*, viz. the eye. This term (remembered sensation) can be misunderstood by no one, and will be found to be entirely free from all those ambiguities produced by words which are used, not in their natural, but in a figurative sense.

When a man sees an animal for the first time, and is told its name, that animal produces a certain effect, which we call a sensation, upon his organs of sight, and henceforth that *sensation* and that *name* become so associated together in the man's brain, that whenever that *name* is pronounced, that *sensation* is reproduced. But when I say *reproduced*, I do not speak literally—I am obliged to use such words as the language will afford—but I mean that there is then, on the utterance of that name, produced in the mind what we call a recollection or remembrance of the animal, or rather of the picture of the animal as originally impressed upon the retina of the eye. I do not pretend to know what this remembrance is—I know no more what it is than I do what matter is. I only know that it is a *something* which we talk about—and to that something I propose to give the name of *remembered sensation*; in order that, by using a term so simple and so universally understood, all possible ambiguity may be avoided. There can be no ambiguity in the use of this term, because even instincts—that is, those inward motions, prickings, or impulses (which are the meanings of the word *instinct*), will range equally well under this appellation.

Words, then, I say, are the names of these *remembered sensations*. But let me not be misunderstood. A *remembered sensation* is still a *sensation*. Perhaps, therefore, it would be more proper to say that words are the signs of sensations, and that their use is to cause those sensations to be reproduced—



that is, what we call remembered. Thus it is. Certain natural objects produce certain effects upon our organs, which we call sensations. We give names to these sensations. The name and the sensation (each with each) become so associated together, that whenever the name of a sensation is pronounced, the sensation is immediately, what we call, remembered—that is, *rememoried*—(for the *b* is a corrupt interpolation)—that is, perceived over again.

I look upon the brain as a chamber filled with innumerable minute beds, in each of which beds there lies a little cluster of sleeping sensations. The office of words is to *wake up* one or more of these little clusters of sensations, and cause them to show themselves from under the bed clothes—that is, to re-impress the senses.

If this be the only office of words, (and I believe it is) then it is manifest that words can be of no earthly use, (as words) unless they be associated in the mind of the hearer, directly or indirectly, with one or other of these groups of sleeping sensations, and have by virtue of that association, when pronounced, the power of waking them, and causing them to re-impress the senses. The *meaning of a word*, therefore, is that sensation (or sensations) which is brought to the recollection of a man when he hears that word pronounced. And if it do not bring to his remembrance any sensation (or sensations), then, for that man, that word has, and can have, no meaning whatever. But the word may be associated in the mind of the *speaker* with certain sensations, which sensations he wishes to call to the recollection of the hearer. But then it is the *speaker* only who *means*—he (the speaker) *means* to excite in his hearer's mind such and such sensations, and he uses a word for that purpose. But the word does not effect that purpose; and therefore the *word* has no meaning. In order to transfer to the *word* the *meaning* which is in the speaker's mind, it is necessary that the word should be associated with the same sensations in the mind of the hearer with which it is associated in the mind of the speaker. Then the word has a meaning—that is, it has acquired the power of a mirror, in which the hearer can see, as it were reflected, the intention or meaning of the speaker. Or the

meaning of a word may be illustrated this way. Suppose every man to carry in his hand a little magic mirror. And suppose that certain articulate sounds, called words, have the power, when uttered, to cause to be reflected in this mirror certain reflected images or pictures. Then I say, that whatever images are reflected in the mirror by virtue of any word when pronounced, those images are the meaning of the word. Whenever, therefore, I hear a word pronounced, I look into my mirror, and if I see no image reflected therein, then I say, that word, for me, has no meaning. And this is what I recommend every man to do when he reads—viz. whenever he meets with any important word, to pause a moment, and look into his magic mirror. If he can always see there a clearly defined image or picture, let him read on. But if he see none, then as those words, and consequently all that is written about those words, must necessarily be to him unintelligible, let him close the book, either as one which deficient education has rendered him incapable of understanding, or else as one containing a definite number of words, laid out into lines and paragraphs, for the amusement of those readers who are satisfied with words, without much troubling their heads about their meanings.

If I have given a correct account of human knowledge, its origin, its amount; and have explained truly what have been called ideas, and defined justly the use and purpose of words, and the manner in which they operate so as to become instruments for the communication of knowledge—then it follows that all words must be, directly or indirectly, merely the names of sensations, since the knowledge of sensations is the whole amount of all we know; and since the sole use of words is to cause these sensations to be remembered.

But it has been said by numberless writers that there are certain words which are not the signs of any sensations whatever. But which yet have the power of modifying the significations of the words, and of defining certain minute distinctions, and of giving a neatness, and facility, and precision to speech. Such words are what are called conjunctions, adverbs, prepositions, articles, &c. &c. I will not stop to inquire how words without meaning can contribute to the facility and precision of

speech, nor how they can have the power of defining minute distinctions. But if there be any such words as these invented for these purposes, then they are not *necessary* to language, but only improvements and embellishments; and there must, therefore, have been a time when these words were not in use. But there is no known language, however barbarous, which is without them. And this alone, I think, is fully enough to prove their *absolute necessity*. Again, if they were invented for mere convenience, and not from necessity, when and by whom were they first invented and used? Not by the grammarians, for they do not invent new words, but only, taking the words of a language as they find them in use, distribute them into classes, and give rules for their right employment—not, however, according to their own arbitrary dictation, but as they find them actually used by the people who speak the language. But it is, I presume, quite inconceivable that a set of naked savages, fully occupied, as they must be, in attending to their natural and more pressing wants, should seat themselves in grave conclave for the purpose of improving and embellishing their language. And yet this must have been the case, not only with one tribe, but with all, since all known languages have them.

But the truth is, these words are absolutely essential to the existence of every language. The mistake has been with the early grammarians, who did not understand them; and this error has been propagated from grammarian to grammarian, from teacher to pupil, ever since; until Horne Tooke explained the mistake. The ridiculous names given to what are called the parts of speech, are a strong proof of the ignorance of grammarians with regard to the nature and use of speech, as well as of the manner in which men seek to cover their ignorance by means of words which convey no meaning. What did they call these parts of speech? They called them, and still call them, by the following *Latin* names: the verb, the noun, the adjective, the adverb, the pronoun, the conjunction, the preposition, the interjection, and article. Some grammarians, however, reckon a great many more than these. I have given you the *Latin* names of the parts of speech, but as you do not understand *Latin*, I will translate them. In plain English, then, the parts



of speech are, according to modern grammarians, the word, the name, the added-to, the to-verb, the for-name, the joining-with, the put-before, the thrown-between, and the little-limb; and then there is, you know, the definite little-limb, and the indefinite little-limb.

## B.

And is it to learn such jargon as this that we send our children to breathe the unwholesome air of a crowded school-room, during the best years of their youth—the only time that most of them can be allowed for the acquirement of knowledge? No wonder the advancement of knowledge, as it regards the great mass of the people, should be so miserably slow, notwithstanding the means of education have been so multiplied! But why do English grammarians resort to Latin names for these so-called parts of speech? Could they not have found names for them in their own tongue? Or could they not have translated the Latin names for the benefit of English readers?

## A.

No—because every one would then have understood the meaning of these names, and would have wanted to know why these particular names were given to these particular sorts of words—and the absurdity would have become manifest to all. If the article were called by the English name little-limb, instead of the Latin word which signifies little-limb, viz. *article*, there is scarcely an infant who would not be asking his papa why the word *the* is called a little-limb—a question which papa would find it extremely difficult to answer. But the word *article* conveys to the child's mind no meaning whatever, and therefore he inquires nothing about it; because, being a word to him destitute of any meaning, it excites no curiosity. But the word little-limb would convey a meaning to his mind—it would remind him that that was the name which he had heard given to his own legs and arms, and this would necessarily lead him to inquire, *why* the same name which was given to his own legs and arms should be given to two particular words, and no others. It would naturally surprise him that things so very different should be called by the same name. As with children,

so it is with many grown persons. If the article were called by its English name of little-limb, do you not think that thousands of persons would be led to inquire *why* it was called by so strange a name, who now never think anything at all about it. I think the very strangeness of the name would excite curiosity. But, as it is, not knowing the meaning of the word, they take it for granted that it has a meaning, and that that meaning is a very proper one, and therefore they never think, nor inquire anything at all about the matter.

Oh! what a prolific source of error is this practice of taking things for granted!!

B.

You have said that grammarians have not understood the nature and meaning of those little words called conjunctions, adverbs, prepositions, &c.; but that Horne Tooke has explained them. How has he effected this?

A.

By showing that they are all either nouns or verbs. Horne Tooke, by a process of *a priori* reasoning on the nature of speech and the human mind, arrived at the conviction that all the sorts of words which are necessary for the communication of ideas are *two only*—nouns and verbs—and that *therefore* all the words in all languages must belong to one or other of these classes. And he further convinced himself by the same process of reasoning, that there could not by possibility be in *rerum naturâ* any such things as what are called abstract nouns or abstract ideas. At this time he was, as he himself tells us, “shamefully ignorant of etymology,” and “did not know even the *characters* of the Anglo-Saxon or Gothic language.” It was not, therefore, the study of etymology which led Horne Tooke to adopt his system of language, but reasons derived from the nature and functions of speech itself—reasons of infinitely greater force than any which are derivable from etymology. It was not till years after he had formed his system, that he sought in etymology *confirmatory evidence* of the truth of his system—that system which he had previously formed from a general consideration of what words must necessarily be from their own nature and purpose. Could it be proved, therefore,

that every etymology which he has given is erroneous, that of itself would not be sufficient to overturn his system. Some part probably of the evidence which he has chosen in order to prove that his system is *right*, may fail to do so. But if the *whole* failed to prove his system *right*, that of itself would be *no proof* that it is *wrong*. The evidence which I call to rebut any charge against me may fail to establish my innocence. But that does, by no means, *prove me guilty*. Had Horne Tooke rested his system of language solely, or even chiefly, upon evidence drawn from etymology, then to have overturned his evidence would have gone very far towards overturning his system. But Horne Tooke has not done this. Proofs drawn from the study of etymology are not at all necessary to support his system. It is built on a much more solid foundation—for it stands erect and impregnable, *based on the nature of things*. Horne Tooke came to the conclusion that language is what he says it is, *not* because etymology shows it to be so, *but* because it is not possible that it should be otherwise. It is to be greatly regretted that he did not publish the particular process of reasoning which conducted him to this conclusion, but contented himself with merely stating that such had been the fact. But he knew how much greater attention is generally paid to particular instances than to that infinitely more weighty kind of evidence, general reasoning—owing, I suppose, either to the incapacity of the multitude, or else to their disinclination for *thinking*. Every one can instantly perceive the force of a particular instance, but to perceive the weight of general reasoning requires long, patient, and clear-headed *thinking*, and a thorough understanding of the subject. But I will repeat to you Horne Tooke's own words on this subject. "If I have been misled, it most certainly was not by etymology, of which I confess myself to have been shamefully ignorant at the time when these my notions of language were first formed. Though even that previous ignorance is *now* a circumstance which confirms me much in my opinion concerning these conjunctions: for I knew not *even the characters* of the language from which any *particular* proofs of the *English* conjunctions were to be drawn. And (notwithstanding Lord Monboddo's



discouraging sneer) it was *general reasoning a priori*, that led me to the particular instances; not particular instances to the general reasoning. This etymology, against whose fascination you would have me guard myself, did not occur to me till many years *after my system was settled*; and it occurred to me suddenly in this manner:—"If my reasoning concerning these conjunctions is well founded, there must then be in the original language from which the English (and so of all other languages) is derived, literally *such* and *such* words bearing precisely *such* and *such* significations. I was the more pleased with this suggestion because I was entirely ignorant even of the Anglo-Saxon and Gothic characters, and the experiment presented to me a mean, either of disabusing myself from error (which I greatly feared), or of obtaining a confirmation sufficiently strong to encourage me to believe (what every man knowing anything of human nature will always be very backward in believing of himself) that I had really made a discovery. For, if upon trial I should find in an unknown language precisely those very words, both in sound, and signification, and application, which in my perfect ignorance I had foretold; what must I conclude, but either that some demon had maliciously inspired me with the spirit of true prophecy in order the more deeply to deceive me; or that my reasoning *on the nature of language* was not fantastical. The event was beyond my expectation; for I instantly found, upon trial, all my predictions verified. This has made me presumptuous enough to assert it universally. Besides that I have since traced these supposed unmeaning, indeclinable conjunctions, with the same success, in many other languages besides the English. And because I know that the generality of minds receive conviction more easily from a number of particular instances than from the surer but more abstracted arguments of general proof; if a multiplicity of uncommon avocations and engagements (arising from a very peculiar situation) had not prevented me, I should long before this have found time enough from my other pursuits, and from my enjoyments, (amongst which idleness is not the smallest) to have shown clearly and satisfactorily, the origin and precise meaning of each of these pretended unmeaning, indeclinable conjunctions, at least in all the dead and living languages of Europe."

But Horne Tooke has been greatly misunderstood. First, it is an egregious error to imagine that he based his system of language on proofs drawn from the science of etymology. Secondly, it is a still more grievous error to suppose that *the teaching of correct etymology* formed any, even the slightest part of his ultimate design. Horne Tooke was not the man to amuse either himself or the world with baubles, which etymology, *per se*, can only be considered. "I have nothing to do with the learning of mere curiosity," says he, "nor am any further concerned with etymology than as it may serve to get rid of the false philosophy received concerning language and the human understanding." Horne Tooke's *Diversions of Purley* are merely the *means* to an *end*. Had he broadly avowed *that end*, Mr. Erskine must have fought in his favor another battle with the Attorney General of those days, and the probability is that he would have fought his second battle with a less brilliant success than attended his first; and that the fate of Galileo would have been re-enacted in the person of Horne Tooke. It was against the rank and luxuriant tree of human prejudice that he directed his attack. But he did not lay an axe to its root—he dared not do so—but he placed a worm there—a worm that shall do the work of the axe—not indeed so swiftly, but not a whit the less infallibly. The *Diversions of Purley* are simply and merely a foundation for a *future superstructure*. "I know," says he, "for *what building* I am laying the foundation." And he concludes the work with these remarkable words: "we will leave off here for the present. It is true that my evening is now fully come, and the night fast approaching. Yet, if we have a tolerably lengthened twilight, we may still perhaps find time enough for a farther conversation on this subject; and finally (if the times will bear it) *to apply this system of language* to all the different systems of metaphysical (i. e. verbal) imposture." And elsewhere he says: "but the importance rises higher when we reflect upon the application of words to metaphysics. And when I say metaphysics, you will be pleased to remember that *all general reasoning*, all politics, law, morality, and divinity, are merely metaphysical." These passages are surely sufficiently remarkable, and sufficiently provative that he considered etymo-

logy merely as a stepping-stone towards something of infinitely greater importance. I believe there are very few persons who have made themselves thoroughly masters of Horne Tooke's theory of language. But of those few, there are still fewer who perceive the mighty consequences, to whole hosts of our long and dearly cherished prejudices, which must *inevitably result* from that theory, if the true one

## B.

But if I have understood you rightly, you have said that all words, in all languages, are the signs or names of sensations; and that therefore there are, in fact, no other words, in any language, excepting those which are, properly speaking, nouns—that is, the names of sensations. Yet you have just told me that Horne Tooke admitted still another sort of words, viz. verbs.

## A.

You will please to remember that Horne Tooke's work was never completed. In the conversation published under the title of *Diversions of Purley*, he accounted for all words by reducing them all to nouns and verbs. But he promised in some *future conversation* to account for the verb also. Had he lived to hold that future conversation I am persuaded that, as he had begun by reducing all words to verbs and nouns, he would have ended by reducing them every one, verbs and all, to nouns only. His opinion manifestly was that all verbs are nouns, and that what are called the participles, tenses, moods, numbers, and persons of verbs, are merely two nouns coalesced together, the original meaning of the second of which has been lost sight of; just as the Latin and Greek pronouns have, from long use, coalesced together, so as to be no longer distinguishable, excepting to the etymologist—as, for instance, in the verb *amo*,—the final *o* being nothing more than a fragment of the pronoun *ego* (that is, I) coalesced with the verb, and which time and long usage has caused to appear part of the verb itself, although in reality, it is not so. That this was his opinion, every attentive reader cannot fail to perceive, from many passages which occur while speaking of the adjective and participle. But if it be still doubted, I conceive the following quite sufficient to set all



doubt at rest. "Notwithstanding R. Johnson's confident assertion that nobody would say so, I maintain," says Horne Tooke, "that the adjective is equally and altogether as much the *name of a thing*, as the noun substantive. And so I say of *all words whatever*. For that is *not a word* which is not the *name of a thing*. Every word being a sound *significant*, must be a *sign*; and if a *sign*, the name of a *thing*." And again: "a verb is (as *every word* also must be) a *noun*."

But it was not essential to the superstructure he intended to rear to proceed farther than he did. Had it been so, he would not have deferred his account of the verb to any *future* conversation. And this forms another proof that etymology, *per se*, formed no part of the grand object of the Diversions of Purley. Neither does it form any part of mine.

But Horne Tooke's authority is not necessary to prove that all verbs are but nouns—that is, names of things. Nor would I pin my faith upon the sleeve even of Horne Tooke if my own *reason* did not assure me that there were sufficient grounds for doing so. There wants no authority but that of common sense to show that all verbs are but nouns, and are therefore the names of things. When we want a verb which we have not got in the language, what do we do? Do we sit down to invent one? Surely not—but we instantly take a noun, and sometimes by the addition of another word, and sometimes without any addition or alteration of any kind, we coin it into a verb at once to suit our purpose. *Ship* is a noun substantive, and *man* is a noun substantive. But in the following sentence *ship*, without any addition or alteration of any kind, becomes a verb. "The British government every year *ship* men to the colonies." Here *ship* is a verb, and *men* is a substantive. But let *ship* and *men* change places, and *ship* becomes a noun again, and *men* becomes a verb. Thus: "The British government *man* ships to the colonies." However used, these words *man* and *ship* are equally nouns—that is, the names of things—and their office is to excite in the mind the pictures of the things of which they are the signs. In the one instance—that wherein *ship* is what we call a noun—the word excites in the mind the picture of a *ship*, and *nothing* more. In the other instance—that wherein

*ship* is what we call a verb—it likewise excites in the mind the picture of a ship—but besides this, it does *something more*—it represents the *ship* now as bearing a particular relation to other things—it has become now the dwelling of a number of men, who form its cargo—over whom it exercises a certain kind of influence—bearing them across the water, the ship itself being influenced by other men not mentioned, viz., the crew. And so of the word *man*. When, by a change of place merely, man becomes the verb, then *it also* excites in the mind *something more* than the mere picture of several men. The relation between the *men* and the *ship* is now changed—the men are now viewed, not as men *merely*, but as men *employed* in a determinate manner in execution of the necessary duties of sailors—and it is now the *men* which influence the *ship*, and are the cause of its going to the colonies, and not the *ship* which influences the *men*. In the former instance, it is the *ship* which constitutes the means which enables the *men* to get to the colonies—in the latter, it is the *men* which enable the *ship* to get there, viz., by controlling and regulating her movements. In the one instance, the *ship* is the agent, and the *men* the patients—in the other, the *men* are the agents, and the *ship* the patient. In both instances, the words *ship* and *men* are manifestly the names of things—that is, nouns. They are, in both modes of using them, exactly the same unchanged words. But in the one use of them they signify things, and *nothing* more—in the other, they signify things, and *something* more—that is, what we call certain particular, definite relations—in two words, added circumstances; and these added circumstances are indicated solely by the *manner of using them*, and not by any change in the word, or in the nature of the word itself. Thus we say: *fire* the beacon—*light* the lamp—*chalk* the floor—*water* the plants—*spur* the horse—*whip* the dog, &c. &c. *Fire, light, chalk, water, spur, whip*, are manifestly nouns converted into what we call verbs—that is, made to signify certain *added circumstances* of relation in addition to the things of which they are the acknowledged signs.

At other times we coin a noun into a verb, by adding to the noun certain other words, the meanings of which have, from the lapse of ages, become at least doubtful, if not entirely lost;

such as the words *ing, en, ed, to*. But it is clear that the mere addition of these monosyllables cannot alter in any way the meaning of the noun whereto they are added, excepting only by putting them into a condition to signify these added circumstances above-mentioned, *in addition* to that picture of things of which they were before and still are the names or signs. Thus from the noun ship, we have *to ship*; from man, *to man*; noise, *to noise*; stable, *to stable, stabled*; boot, *to boot, booted*; spur, *to spur, spurred*; horse, *to horse, horsed*; house, *to house, housed*. Paper, *to paper, papered*; plaster, *to plaster, plastered*; brick, *to brick up, bricked up*; dish, *to dish up, dished up*; milk, *to milk, milked*; rain, *to rain, rained*; fire, *to fire, firing*; lock, *to lock, locking*; star, *to star, starring*—Miss So and So is now *starring* at such and such a country town—salt, *to salt, salted*; pepper, *to pepper, peppered, &c.* In short, whenever we want a verb, we never hesitate a single instant, but take a noun and coin it into a verb on the spot; and this simple plan, so simple that nothing can be simpler, is equally adopted by the educated and uneducated alike. We never dream for a single instant of sitting down to manufacture a verb. If, then, this very simple plan be that which we adopt *now*, why should we suppose that any more *difficult* and more *complicated* plan was *ever* adopted, *at any time*? If this simple plan be sufficient *now*, surely it was sufficient to serve the purpose of a set of uneducated and

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The author has received a letter, signed X. Y., desiring to know what is the meaning of the word *minx*, and why it is applied to a bold, forward girl. *Minx* is a corruption of the Low-German word *minsk*, which signifies *mannish*. By an exceedingly common transposition, the *sk* have been transposed into *ks*, for the greater facility of pronunciation; and the word ought to be spelled, as Scott spells it, *minks*. But the sound of *ks* being frequently expressed in our language by *x*, this latter letter has been used instead of *ks*, but very improperly. In the Anglo-Saxon, the same word is spelled *menise*; in the Mæso-Gothic, *mannisk*; in Danish, *menneske*; in Swedish, *menniska*; in Icelandic, *manneskia*; in Modern-German, it is *mensh*; from which we get our vulgar word *wench*. The word *minks*, therefore, that is, *mannish*, is applied with great propriety to girls of a bold, forward, *mannish*, that is, unfeminine, temper and bearing.

I do not know any dictionary wherein the application of this word is accounted for, or its origin explained.



naked savages, who did not *pretend* to understand *anything* beyond the plain and evident objects of *sense*! It is perfectly monstrous to suppose that a wild man of the woods could, by any possibility, coin a word in order to make it the sign of something which he could neither see, hear, taste, smell, nor feel—as, for instance, *action, motion, time, space, power, influence, come, go, fly, have, be, &c. &c.* It will bear a question whether he could coin *any* word. It will bear a question whether a whole college of the most learned men *could*, by their *united labors and talents*, coin one single *entirely new word*, which should become current through the country, and incorporated in the language. It will bear a question whether there *ever was*, in *any age*, an *entirely new word invented*. It will bear a question whether *all* the primitive words of all the languages of the earth (which are, comparatively, extremely few), be not merely imitations of natural sounds, such as the cries of animals, the creaking of trees, the rushing of torrents, the snapping of boughs, and numberless other natural sounds peculiar to the forest. The child that is born deaf is also dumb, and this of itself goes far to prove that we get all our variety of sounds through the ear alone; and that we can utter no sound that we have not *heard before*. A new word is a new sound; and let any man try to enunciate an *entirely new articulate sound*, and he will instantly perceive how difficult a matter it is to invent a new word. In the Greek, Latin, Italian, French, English, and other cognate languages, there are many words which are now the names of things which can be clearly shown to be mere imitations, by the human voice, of natural sounds. As a familiar instance, in our own language, we have the word *cuckold*, which is merely the Italian word *cuculo*, (which means *cuckow*) in an English dress; and ought to be written *cuckow-ed*.

From the Italian noun *cuculo*, we have coined our verb, *to cucol*, (without the terminating *d*,) “as the common people\* rightly

\* It is amongst the entirely uneducated people of the provinces that the true pronunciation of any language will always be longest preserved, and in the greatest purity. They remain the longest uninfluenced by fashion, and unadulterated with foreigners. They have neither the means nor the motives of change. The corrupt pronunciation of the city may even still be frequently

pronounce it, and as the verb *was formerly*, and should *still* be written." Here, then, we have first of all a natural cry—*cuckow*! Then this natural cry becomes the name of a bird. Next, from a peculiar habit of this bird, this natural cry becomes the parent of the Latin noun *cuculus*, of the Italian noun *cuculo*, of the English verb *to cucol*, and finally of the English noun *cuckold*—that is, *cuckowed*.

Another reason why I believe all words to be nouns—that is, the names of things, is, because these nouns, variously used, and variously combined, are all that is absolutely necessary for the communication of knowledge. A third reason (and a very strong one—perhaps the strongest of all) is derived from a consideration of the nature and natural condition of man, and of the nature and purpose of speech. A fourth reason I derive from reflection on the vast numbers of verbs which no one will think of denying are formed directly from nouns—which are, in fact, nothing but nouns with a slight alteration in the termination, or by the simple addition of a prefix or suffix. Thus, in the Greek, from *hippos*, a horse, comes *hippeuo*, I ride; from

corrected by the true pronunciation of the country village. What we call *kettle*, the village house-maid (unless, like the city house-maid, she too has at length purchased a Walker's Pronouncing Dictionary), calls *kittle*; and, so calling it, she calls it by its right name, which is *cytel*, the Anglo-Saxon *c* being always hard like *k*. The word, therefore, should be spelled *kytel*, and pronounced *kyttel*, as the villagers do still pronounce it. The villager's word *axe*, also, is equally correct with our word *ask*; for in the mother-tongue, the word was *axian* as well as *ascian*. Our word *neither*, (which Walker absurdly pronounces *neether*) the villager pronounces as though it were written *narther*, or *nawther*. And the villager is right; for the true spelling of the word is *nathor*, *nauther*, and *nawther*; and it was so written until an aping fashion, and a mincing affectation corrupted it. There is no such word in the language as *neither*, nor ever was. To Walker's Dictionary belongs the honor of giving corrupt pronunciation a wider range, and introducing it even into the provinces. There is scarcely a kitchen-maid now who does not buy a Walker's Dictionary, out of which she teaches herself to "talk dictionary," and teaches her lover to "talk dictionary too." "John," says she, "you must not say *nawther*—it is vulgar—you must say *neether*." If John should ask who told her so, she would reply, "Walker's Dictionary;" and John would not have the wit to ask in his turn, "who told Mr. Walker so?" This work is greatly inferior to most other English lexicons, and ought to be called, *par excellence*, the kitchen-maid's dictionary, or milliner's vade-mecum.

*potos*, drink, comes *potao*, I drink; from *thrinkos*, a wall, comes *thrinkoein*, to wall up; from *timé*, honor, comes *timao*, I honor; from *philos*, a friend, comes *philoo*, I love; from *algos*, grief or pain, comes *alguno*, I grieve or pain another. That is, *alg* (pain), *hon* (him), *ego* (I), pain him I, or I pain him—the three words having, in the lapse of ages, and from carelessness and rapidity in speaking, been finally contracted, and coalesced into one—thus *alghonego*, *algonego*, *algoneo*, *algono*, *alguno*. In the Latin, from *honor*, honor, comes *honoro*, I honor; from *labor*, labor, comes *laboro*, I labor; from *lac* or *lacte*, milk, comes *lacto*, I feed with milk, I suckle—that is, *lacte*, (milk), *ego* (I), milk I, or I milk, (I give milk)—which time and rapid utterance have caused to coalesce thus: *lact'ego*, *lacteo*, *lacto*. It is the unquestionable effect of time to contract and shorten words, and to cause two or more to coalesce into one. From *flamma*, a flame, comes *flammo*, I flame; from *pugnus*, a fist, comes *pugno*, I fight—that is, I fist—from *equus*, a horse, comes *equito*, I ride, that is, I horse; from *miles*, a soldier, comes *milito*, I make war, or I war against, or I play the soldier. But enough—the instances of this manner of forming verbs in the Greek and Latin are almost numberless. In modern English I have already mentioned several. It is not necessary to enumerate any more. I will be content with asserting that there is no one word in the English language, whether noun, pronoun, adverb, conjunction, preposition, interjection, or any other, which may not be readily coined, and which has not, at some time or other, been actually coined, in conversation, into a verb by this simple plan. Thus we say: “but me no buts”—and I frequently hear boys in the streets say one to another, while amusing themselves with jumping over posts: “Jack, I’ll bet you a penny I can *over* this,” pointing to a post. Here the word *over* is a verb. Now, I say, that the uncultivated savage, as far as it regards language, is the exact prototype of these rude, uneducated boys, and that they would, in using words, pursue the same plan which is pursued by these boys, and other uneducated people. I have given you instances of this practice of using nouns as verbs, in modern English, Greek, and Latin. Nothing could be easier than to fill a quire of



paper with similar instances from each of these languages ; and I could, without any difficulty, select an equal number of instances from three or four other different languages. I shall content myself with selecting a few instances from our fine old mother-tongue, in order to show that this same practice was in use among barbarians, as well as among polished people. Thus the Anglo-Saxons converted

## NOUNS.

*Spor*—a foot-print  
*Spathl*—saliva  
*Spell*—speech  
*Staf*—a staff  
  
*Stæn*—a stone  
*Stan*—a rock  
*Wyl* or *will*—well, spring,  
                   or fountain  
*Boga*—a bow  
*Cæg*—a key  
*Bysn*—a pattern  
  
*Egle*—a thorn  
*Dyne*—a noise  
*Ald*—fire  
*Sweg*—sound  
*Swefn*—a dream  
*Steorra*—star  
*Weg*—a way

into

## VERBS.

*Spir-ian*—to track  
*Spatl-ian*—to froth  
*Spell-ian*—to declare  
*Staf-ian*—to point, to direct  
  
*Stæn-an*—to stone  
*Stand-an*—to stand\*  
*Wyll-an* or *will-an*—to  
                   will†  
*Bug-an*—to bow or bend  
*Cægg-ian*—to lock  
*Bysn-ian*—to set an example  
  
*Egl-ian*—to feel pain  
*Dyn-an*—to make a noise  
*Æl-an*—to light  
*Sweg-an*—to sound  
*Swefn-ian*—to dream  
*Steor-an*—to steer  
*Weg-an*—to carry

\* To assume the erect and firm position of the rock—the *d* is interpolated to lengthen the first syllable, and so convey an idea of firmness.

† This origin of our word *will* may easily be disputed. I firmly believe it to be the true one nevertheless. The manner in which the will or wish to do a thing arises in the mind from a hidden, secret, and mysterious cause or source, to us wholly unknown, and makes itself felt, is not unlike the manner in which the water of a well or spring arises from the secret and mysterious chambers of the earth, and makes itself visible. There is still in our language an obsolete word *willy*, signifying *willing*. This *willy* is the Anglo-Saxon word *wil-lic*—that is, *wil-like*, or like a *will*—or, as I believe, like a *wyl*, well or spring. We say: “I will do it *willingly*”—that is, of my own accord, without fee or force, as water wells from a spring.

As we make verbs out of nouns, so we make nouns out of verbs. Thus the dog-Latin verb *affidavit*, which signifies he or she has promised, we use as a noun. We say: "he has made his *affidavit*." The Roman Catholics say: "I have said three *aves* and five *credos*, which means: "I have said three *all-hails* and five *I believes*." In the taverns of London, the waiters call a certain measure of brandy, "a *go* of brandy." Formerly there were lotteries called *little go's*. There is now a carriage called a *fly*. The Americans say: "Well, I never heard the *beat* of that." He has put his *imprimatur* to it—that is, "he has put his *let it be printed* to it—such and such are my *tenets*, that is, my *he holds*—the landlord holds his *audit* to-morrow, that is, his *he hears*—such a man's conversation consists of nothing but *ipse dixits*, that is, *he hath said its*—it has received the king's *fiat*, or the king's *veto*, that is, the king's *let it be done*, or the king's *I forbid*—I'll have a *walk*—I'll have a *swim*—I'll take a *run*—let us take a *drive*—let us take a *ride*—are you going to the *hunt*?—have you taken *breakfast*?—turn the horse into the paddock and let him enjoy the luxury of a *roll* or a *wallow*—whose *throw* is it? at dice—whose *play* is it? at billiards—whose *move* is it? at chess—these, and numberless others, are all instances of what we call verbs used as what we call nouns. They are instances of the *abbreviation* of whole sentences into *one word* for the sake of *dispatch*. They are single words used in the place of several words, for the sake of *brevity*. The farmer says: "I will *crop* that field with wheat"—which means that he will take such steps as shall enable him to *cut*, from the surface of the field, *wheat*, next year. He also says: "I expect *good crops*"—which means that he expects that *that which he cuts* from the surface of his fields will be abundant. In these two sentences, the word *crop* is both noun and verb, but, in both cases, it means the same thing, viz. *that which is cut from the surface of the earth*.

In short, there is no word, in any language, which is not a noun, or name, and the sign of one or more sensations, either directly or indirectly—that is, either directly or by being the sign of *other words* which are the *direct* signs of sensible objects. It is true that the lapse of ages has rendered it quite impossible

to trace many of our verbs up to the sensible object which they originally represented. In many instances the particular sensible objects originally represented by many of our verbs, was forgotten *before* the language became a *written one*. Still these words are, in every instance, the signs of sensations or pictures; and it is the same with what are absurdly called abstract terms. Thus, if you desire a painter to embody his idea of *humility*, he will have no difficulty at all in doing so. He would put upon his canvass, without the smallest hesitation, the representation of one person kneeling or prostrate on the ground before another person sitting or standing—or something similar to this. Now, then, if any person ask me the meaning of the word *humility*, I refer him to that picture, and tell him it means what he sees there.

## B.

But that does not seem to me to be correct. For what he sees there, are rather the *effects* of humility, than humility itself.

## A.

Very true—and herein language excels painting. Then, I say, humility means that *sensation* or *sensations* which produces those consequences which he sees depicted on that canvass. So, if any one pronounce the single word *give*, and inquire its meaning, the picture which would arise in any mind would be one in which was represented a person extending his hand, with something in it, toward another. And some such picture as this is what must occur to the mind of *every one* who sits down to inquire of himself what is the idea which he attaches to the word *give*. There would and *could* be no important variety in the picture, if a thousand men were to ask themselves the same question. A word, then, which has this power of bringing to the mind always one uniform picture, (uniform in all important points) is a good, proper, and useful sign of sensation. It is a *general* sign, it is true, and so is the word *tree*. When *tree* is pronounced in the hearing of several men, it brings to the mind of each man probably the sensation of a different tree. But the sensation of each tree will be the same as it regards essentials—that is, each ideal tree will contain *all* the attributes *necessary* to



constitute the sensation or picture of a tree. And so of the word *give*. The picture brought to the mind of one person out of the thousand might possibly be that of a bird feeding its young. Still the essentials of the picture are the same, viz. something voluntarily parted with by one being, and transferred to another. But if the word *virtue* or *truth* be pronounced in the hearing of a thousand men, will the picture excited in all their minds be *one* and *uniform* in all essentials? Nay, I ask you, will there be any picture or other sensation excited *at all*? The word *give* most probably arose from some old word signifying the hand. We still use the word hand precisely in the same sense as the word give. *Hand* me a chair—*hand* me my snuff-box—*hand* me the salt.

I assert, therefore, that there is, in all languages, but *one sort of word*—and that is the *noun*, or *name* of one or more *sensations*; and that words which do not signify either directly or indirectly one or more sensations, are mere idle noises signifying nothing, and serving no other purpose than that of setting mankind together by the ears. But this *noun* is sometimes used as a *noun merely*—that is, representing the picture of the object *indefinitely*, without regard to any particular relation to other objects. Thus, in the following sentence, “the British government possess ships,” the word *ships* merely excites in the mind an idea of several ships in an indefinite manner—without defining the particular relation which these ships bear to other objects. They may be in the docks, or at anchor in the Thames, or sailing over the ocean—nothing is defined as to their particular relation to other objects, and therefore every man is at liberty to paint them in his mind as he pleases, either in the docks, or in the river, or on the sea. But if I say: “the British government *ship* men to America,” then the various relations which the ship or ships bear to other objects are at once defined—and in the picture excited in the mind, the ships will be seen “walking the waters” of the “vasty deep.” These particular relations I call “added circumstances.” All words, therefore, in all languages, are nouns—sometimes used to signify sensible objects *merely*, and sometimes to signify sensible objects with these *added circumstances*—but always to signify

*sensible objects.* When they signify sensible objects *merely*, they are called nouns. When they *also* signify these added circumstances, they are called verbs. And this brings me to the point at which Horne Tooke started, viz. that all the words that are necessary in any language to communicate ideas are what we now call nouns and verbs.

#### ABSTRACT OF HORNE TOOKE'S THEORY OF LANGUAGE.

“The purpose of language is to communicate our thoughts—  
 “which principle, being kept *singly* in contemplation, has  
 “misled all those who have reasoned on this subject. I imagine  
 “that it is, in some measure, with the vehicle of thoughts, as  
 “with the vehicles for our bodies. Necessity produced both.  
 “The first carriage for men was no doubt invented to transport  
 “the bodies of those who from infirmity or otherwise could not  
 “move themselves; but should any one, desirous of under-  
 “standing the purpose and meaning of all the parts of our  
 “modern elegant carriages, attempt to explain them on this *one*  
 “*principle alone*, viz. that they were necessary for conveyance—  
 “he would find himself wofully puzzled to account for the  
 “wheels, the seats, the springs, the blinds, the glasses, the  
 “lining, &c.; not to mention the mere ornamental parts of  
 “gilding, varnish, &c.

“Abbreviations are the wheels of language, the wings of  
 “Mercury, and though we might be *dragged* along without  
 “them, it would be with *much difficulty*, very heavily, and  
 “tediously.

“There is nothing more admirable nor more useful than the  
 “invention of signs. At the same time there is nothing more  
 “productive of error when we neglect to observe their com-  
 “plication. Into what blunders, and consequently into what  
 “disputes and difficulties might not the excellent art of short-  
 “hand writing, practised almost exclusively by the English, lead  
 “foreign philosophers; who, not knowing that we had any  
 “other alphabet, should suppose each mark to be the sign of a  
 “single sound! If they were very laborious and very learned  
 “indeed, it is likely they would write as many volumes on the

“subject, and with as much bitterness against each other, as  
 “grammarians have done from the same sort of mistake  
 “concerning language; until perhaps it should be suggested to  
 “them that there may be not only signs of sounds; but again,  
 “for the sake of abbreviation, signs of those signs, one under  
 “another, in a continued progression.

“The errors of grammarians have arisen from supposing all  
 “words to be *immediately* either the signs of things or the signs  
 “of ideas; whereas, in fact, many words are merely abbrevia-  
 “tions employed for *dispatch*, and are the *signs of other words*.  
 “And these are the artificial wings of Mercury, by means of  
 “which the Argos-eyes of philosophy have been cheated.

“The first aim of language was to communicate our thoughts  
 “—the *second* to do it with dispatch. The difficulties and  
 “disputes concerning language have almost entirely arisen  
 “from neglecting the consideration of this *latter* purpose of  
 “speech; which, though subordinate to the former, is almost as  
 “necessary in the commerce of mankind. Words have been  
 “called *winged*, and they well deserve that name, when their  
 “abbreviations are compared with the progress which speech  
 “could make without these inventions, but compared with the  
 “*rapidity of thought*, they have not the smallest claim to that  
 “title. Philosophers have calculated the difference of velocity  
 “between sound and light; but who will attempt to calculate  
 “the difference between speech and thought! What wonder  
 “then that the invention of all ages should have been upon the  
 “stretch to add such wings to their conversation as might  
 “enable it, if possible, to keep pace in some measure, with their  
 “minds. Hence chiefly the variety of words.

“The two great purposes of speech (viz. first, the communi-  
 “cating our thoughts, and, secondly, the doing so with *dispatch*)  
 “will lead us to the distribution of all words into—

“1. Those which are *necessary* for the communication of our  
 “thoughts; and,

“2. *Abbreviations* employed for the sake of *dispatch*.

“In all languages there are only two sorts of words which  
 “are *necessary* for the communication of our thoughts; and  
 “they are—



“ 1. The noun, and

“ 2. Verb.

“ All other words are merely *substitutes* for these, which I  
 “ include under the title of *abbreviations*. Without using any  
 “ other sort of word whatever but the *verb* and *noun*, we can  
 “ relate or communicate anything which we can relate or  
 “ communicate with the help of all the others. We cannot do  
 “ it *so well and rapidly* however, but we can do it nevertheless.  
 “ A sledge cannot be drawn along so smoothly, and easily, and  
 “ swiftly, as a carriage with wheels—but it *can* be *dragged*.  
 “ Your first attempts to communicate your thoughts with the  
 “ help of the noun and verb merely, will seem very awkward ;  
 “ and you will stumble as often as a horse long used to be shod,  
 “ that has newly cast his shoes. Indeed, without *abbreviations*,  
 “ language can get on but lamely ; and *therefore* they have been  
 “ introduced, in different plenty, and more or less happily, in all  
 “ languages.

“ This fact, viz. that we can communicate our thoughts by  
 “ means of the noun and verb alone, is the great proof of all I  
 “ have advanced.

“ The business of the mind, as far as it concerns language,  
 “ appears to me to be very simple. It extends no farther than  
 “ to receive impressions, that is, to have *sensations or feelings*.  
 “ What are called its *operations*, are merely the operations of  
 “ *language*.”

#### WORDS NECESSARY FOR THE COMMUNICATION OF OUR IDEAS.

*That*—the word *that* (call it what you please, either *article*, or  
*pronoun*, or *conjunction*) retains *always* one and the same signi-  
 fication ; and is, in fact, a verb, the meaning of which will be  
 explained \*hereafter. Unnoticed *abbreviation* in construction  
 and difference of position have caused an *appearance* of fluctua-  
 tion in its meaning ; and have misled the grammarians of all  
 languages, both ancient and modern ; for in *all* they make the  
*same* mistake. What is called the *conjunction* THAT and the  
*pronoun* THAT are one and the same word, having the same  
 signification. And this is true in all languages.

## EXAMPLE.

I wish you to believe *that* I would not wilfully hurt a fly.

## RESOLUTION.

I would not wilfully hurt a fly ; I wish you to believe *that*.

## EXAMPLE.

She, knowing *that* Crooke had been indicted for forgery, did so and so.

## RESOLUTION.

Crooke had been indicted for forgery ; she, knowing *that*, did so and so.

There is no conceivable use of what is called the conjunction *that*, which cannot, by resolution, be shown to be nothing more than the pronoun *that*, as it is called ; but which will presently be shown to be a verb.

*If*—is merely the imperative of the Gothic and Anglo-Saxon verb *gifan*, *to give*. And in those languages, as well as in the English formerly, this supposed conjunction was pronounced and written as the common imperative, purely *gif*. Thus :

“ My largesse

“ Hath lotted her to be your brother’s mistress

“ *Gif* she can be reclaimed ; *gif* not, his prey.”

And accordingly our corrupted *if* has *always* the signification of the English imperative *give*, and no other. And this accounts for one particular use of the conjunction *that* (so called) which could not otherwise be explained.

“ I wonder he can move ! that he’s not fixt !

“ If *that* his feelings be the same with mine.”

## RESOLUTION.

His feelings be the same with mine, *give that*, I wonder he can move, &c. So that the resolution of the construction in these instances of the use of the so-called conjunction *that*, is precisely the same as in all others. And here, as an additional proof, we may observe, that wherever the *datum*, upon which any conclusion depends, is a sentence, the pronoun *that*, if not expressed, is always understood, and may be inserted after *if*. As in the instance I have given above, the poet might have said,

“ *Gif that* she can be reclaimed,” &c.—

for the resolution is—"She can be reclaimed, *give that*, my largesse has lotted her to be your brother's mistress. She cannot be reclaimed, *give that*, my largesse hath lotted her to be your brother's prey." But the pronoun *that* is not understood, and cannot be inserted after *if*, where the *datum* is not a sentence, but some noun governed by the verb *if* or *give*. As—

## EXAMPLE.

"How will the weather dispose of you to-morrow? *If* fair, it will send me abroad; *if* foul, it will keep me at home." "Here we cannot say—*if that* fair, it will send me abroad; *if that* foul, it will keep me at home." Because, in this case, the verb *if* governs the noun; and the resolved construction is—"Give fair weather, it will send me abroad; *give* foul weather, it will keep me at home." But make the *datum* a sentence, as—"if it is fair weather, it will send me abroad; *if* it is foul weather, it will keep me at home;" and then the pronoun *that* is understood, and may be inserted after *if*; as—"if *that* it is fair weather, it will send me abroad; *if that* it is foul weather, it will keep me at home."

The resolution then being—

"It is fair weather, (*give that*) it will send me abroad;"

"It is foul weather, (*give that*) it will keep me at home." And this you will find to hold universally, not only with *if*, but with many other supposed conjunctions, such as *but that*, *unless that*, *though that*, *lest that*, &c. (which are really verbs) put in this manner before the pronoun *that*.

*An*—was formerly used occasionally instead of the word *if*, as in the following sentence from Twelfth Night. "*An* you had any eye behind you, you might see more detraction at your heels, than fortunes before you." This word *an* is also a verb, and may very well supply the place of *if*; it being nothing else but the imperative of the Anglo-Saxon verb *anan*, which likewise means to *give* or *grant*. And this manner of accounting for the so-called conjunctions holds good in *all* languages. Not indeed that they must all mean precisely as these two do, *give* or *grant*; but some word equivalent; such as—*be it*, *suppose*, *allow*, *permit*, *put*, *suffer*, &c.



## HORNE TOOKE'S SYNOPSIS OF THE ENGLISH CONJUNCTIONS.

<i>If</i>	} are the imperatives	<i>Gif</i>	} of their respective verbs	<i>Gif-an, to give</i>
<i>An</i>		<i>An</i>		<i>An-an, to grant</i>
<i>Unless</i>		<i>Onles</i>		<i>Onles-an, to dismiss</i>
<i>Eke</i>		<i>Eac</i>		<i>Eac-an, to add</i>
<i>Yet</i>		<i>Get</i>		<i>Get-an, to get</i>
<i>Still</i>		<i>Stell</i>		<i>Stell-an, to put</i>
<i>Else</i>		<i>Ales</i>		<i>Ales-an, to dismiss</i>
<i>Tho'</i>		<i>Thaf</i>		<i>Thaf-ian, to allow</i>
or		or		or
<i>Though</i>		<i>Thafig</i>		<i>Thafig-an, to allow</i>
<i>Būt</i>		<i>Bot</i>		<i>Bot-an, to boot</i>
<i>Būt</i>		<i>Be-utan</i>		<i>Beon-utan, to be-out</i>
<i>Without</i>		<i>Wyrth-utan</i>		<i>Wyrthan-utan, to be-out</i>
<i>And</i>		<i>An-ad</i>		<i>Anan-ad, to give a heap</i> or, to heap together

*Lesed* is the past participle *lesed* of *lesan*, to dismiss.

*Since*—siththan, syne, seand-es, siththe, or sin-es—is the participle of *seon*, to see.

## PREPOSITIONS.

*Chez*—French preposition, from the Italian *casa*, a race, family, nation, or sect—and that again from the Latin *casa*, a cottage, or house; as, *Je viens de chez vous*, i. e. á vous.

*With*—is the imperative of *withan*, to join, and means *join*—as “a house *with* a roof,” that is, “a house *join* a roof.”

*Without*—is the imperative of *wyrthan*, to be, and *out*; and means *be out*—as “a house *without* a roof,” that is, “a house *be out* a roof.”

*Avec*—a French preposition signifying *with*, anciently written *avec que*, is nothing more than “*avez que*,” that is, *have that*.

*Sans*—a French preposition signifying *without*—from the Italian *senza*, often used thus, “*senza di te*,” i. e. *assenza*, *absence*. So the Greek *choris*, without, from *chorizein*, to sever—and the German *sonder*, without, from *sondern*, to sever. And so the Latin *sine*, without, contracted from *sit ne*, that is, *be not*. And so also the

Italian *fuori*, the Spanish *affuera*, the French *hors*, anciently written *fors*, all signifying *without*, are all only so many corruptions of the Latin *foris*, which means *from the doors*.

*Thorough* and *through*—are the Mæso-Gothic *dauro*, which signifies a door or passage. So the Spanish *por*, the Latin and Italian *per*, and the French *par*, are nothing more than the Greek *poros*, a passage.

*From*—is the Mæso-Gothic *frum*, and signifies *beginning* or *origin*.

*To*—is the Mæso-Gothic *taui* or *tauhts*, and means *act* or *end*, from *taujan*, to do, to accomplish, to end. So the Latin *ad*, (which is equivalent to our *to*), is from the verb *ago*, to act—contracted thus, *agitum*, *agdum*, *agd*, *ad*—or thus, *actum*, *act*, *at*—*ad* and *at* having both been used indifferently to signify *to*.

*Till*—contraction of *to while*—that is, *to time*.

*Until*—that is, *unto while*.

*For*—from Mæso-Gothic *fairina*, signifies *cause*. The French *car* (for) is nothing more than the Latin *quare*, which is itself only a contraction of the Latin phrase, *que eâ re*, which signifies, “and with or by that thing.”

*Of*—Anglo-Saxon *afora*—signifies *offspring*, *consequence*.

*By*—is the contraction of *byth*, which is the imperative of the Anglo-Saxon *beon*, to be—and signifies *be*, with a subaudition, sometimes, of the words *instrument*, *cause*, *agent*.

*Between*—is a contraction of *be* and *twegen*—thus, *betwegen*, *betwegn*, *between*, and signifies *by two* or *by twos*.

*Betwixt*—in Chaucer, *bytwyte*—is a similar compound of *be*, and the Mæso-Gothic *twos*, i. e. *two*.

*Before*, *behind*, *below*, &c. &c., are self-evident.

*Beneath*—compound of *be* and *neath*, that is, *low*.

*Under*—that is, *on neder*, or *nether*—as, “under a tree,” that is, “at the *lower part* of a tree.”

*Beyond*—Anglo-Saxon *geond*, *geoned*, *goned*, is the past participle of *gan*, to go.

*Ward*—from *wardian*, to look—as, “homeward,” that is, “home

*look*," or looking in the direction of home. "*Toward home*"—that is, *to ward home*—that is, "*look*," the "*end*" of your looking being "*home*."

*Athwart*—*athweort*, *athweoried*, past participle of *thweorian*, to wrest, to twist, to curve.

*Among*, *amongst*—past participle of *mængan*, to mix, means *mixt*, or *mingled with*.

*Against*—*ongegen*, from some verb collateral with the Dutch *jenenen*, to meet, *rencontrer*, to oppose.

*Ymell*—Danish, *megler*, *melerer*—French, *mêler*, to blend.

*Amid*, *amidst*—*on middes*, in the middle.

*Along*—*on long*, *on length*, past participle of *lengian*, to stretch, to produce—means *produced by a thing*—as, "it was all along of you that I did so and so"—my act was produced by you—that is, you were the cause of my performing the act. "*Along the bank of the river*"—that is, "*on length*, on the length of the river's bank."

*Around*, *round*—*on round*—that is, in a circle. So in the Latin preposition *circum* also signifies a ring. The equivalent Dutch preposition is *om-ring*—that is, *about a ring*.

*Nigh*, *near*, *next*—Anglo-Saxon *nih*, *neh*, *neah*, *neahg*, *neahgest*, *next*.

*Instead*—Anglo-Saxon *stead* signifies a place.

*About*—*on but*, i. e. on the outward extremity—*but* signifying the end of anything.

*After*—comparative of *aft*, which probably signifies *the back*.

*Down*—*dufan*, the past participle of *dufian*, to sink, to dive.

*Up*—*ufa*, high, probably meaning in its original sense, the head—derived from *hebban*, to heave, from whose past participle, *heafod*, or *hof*, comes the Anglo-Saxon *heafod*, which means *a head*, the German *hof*, which also means *a head*, and our English word *head*. It must be remembered that our word *head* was anciently pronounced *heved*.

*Upper*, *over*—*ufera*, *ofere*, *ofer*. The comparative of *ufa*, high.

*Upon*—Anglo-Saxon *ufon*, *ufan*, from *heafen*, *heafon*, *heaved*, exalted, heaven.

*Bove*—*be* and *ufan*, contracted into *bufan*, *buv*, *bove*.

*Above*—*on bufan*.



*In*—a fragment of the Mæso-Gothic and Anglo-Saxon word *inna*, which signifies the womb.

*Out*—is the German *haut*, (pronounced *hout*) and signifies the skin.

## ADVERBS.

*Adrift*—past participle of *adrifan*, to drive, and signifies *driven away*.

*Agast*, *aghast*—*may be* past participle of *agase*, to look intensely, or the past participle *agids* of the Mæso-Gothic *agjan*, to fear, corrupted into *agidst*, *agist*, *agast*, as *whiles* was corrupted into *whilst*—or it may be the past participle of a verb formed from *agis*, which means, fear and trembling. This word *agis* is the long-sought origin of our word *ague*, correctly pronounced by the vulgar *aguy*.

*Asunder*—from *sundrian*, to sever, to scatter, and that again from *sond*, sand.

*Belike*—*by luck*; in Danish, *lykke*, in Swedish, *lycka*—mean *luck*, chance.

*Forth*—French, *fors*, (now *hors*) from the Latin *foris*, that is, *out of doors*.

*More*, *most*—the comparative and superlative of *mæ*, *mowe*, or *mo*, the past participle of *mawan*, to mow. *Mo* originally signified that which is *mown together*, or brought together by *mowing*, but afterwards any heap whatever.

*Much*—is a diminutive of *mo*. *Mokel* was successively corrupted into *mykel*, *mochil*, *muchel*, *moche*, *much*.

*Nevertheless*—is *never the less*. So *natheless* is *na the less*.

*Rather*—comparative of *rath*, i. e. soon, early, quick.

*Fie*—imperative of *fian*, to hate.

*Quickly*—*quick* signifies alive, living—and *ly* in this and similar instances is a corruption of *like*. Thus, gentlemanly means gentleman-like—manly, man-like.

*Scarce*—in Dutch, *skaars*—in Italian, *scarso*, rare.

*Seldom*—*selden*, uncommon.

*Stark*—as *stark* mad, that is, strongly mad. *Stark* means strong.

*Very*—in ancient French and English *veray*, (in modern French

*vrai*) from the Italian, and that from the Latin *verus*, true.

*Once*—*anes, ones*, genitive of *one*. Subaudi time, turn, &c.

*Twice*—*twies, twyis*, genitive of *twai, twa*, &c. *two*.

*Thrice*—*thries, thryis*, &c. genitive of *thri, three*.

*Alone*—is *all one*.

*Only*—is *one-like*.

*Anon*—that is, *on one*, (*moment understood*) *On* corrupted by rapid pronunciation into *an* before a vowel, and *a* before a consonant, has produced numberless so-called adverbs, as, aboard, aside, aback, &c. &c.

*Astray*—from *strægan*, to scatter like *straw*, to stray.

*Atwist*—past participle of *twisan*, to *twice*, to fold.

*Awry*—from *writhan*, to *writhe*.

*Askant*—in Dutch *aschuined* from *schuinen*, to cut awry, from *schuin*, crooked. Hence, perhaps, *squint*.

*Askance*—in Dutch, *aschuins*, sloping, awry.

*Askew*—akin, to the Danish *skiæv*, wry, crooked.

*Aswoon*—*suanian, aswunan*, to faint.

*Enough*—Dutch *genoeg*, from *genoegen*, to content. Anglo-Saxon *genog, genoh*, is apparently the past participle of *genogan*, to multiply.

*Fain*—*fægened, fægen, fægn*, past participle of *fægenian, fægnian*, to be glad, to rejoice.

*Lief*—*leof*, beloved, is the past participle of *lufian*, to love.

*Liever*—*leofre*, the comparative of *leof*.

*Liefest*—*leofest*, the superlative.

*Lo*—look

*Needs*—*need is*, contracted into *needs*.

*Certes*—*certe is*, (that is, *certain is*), contracted into *certes*.

*Perhaps*—by or through *haps*, i. e. accidents.

*Aye, yea, yes*—from *agan* to have—or from *ayez*, signifying *have that*. In German, Dutch, Swedish, and Danish, the word *yes*, corresponds with the word signifying *to have*. So the French *oui* is from *ouir*, to hear, signifying “I hear,” and by implication, “am not averse.”

*Not*, contract. *no*—from the Danish *nödig*, or Dutch *noode, node, no*, all of which signify averse, unwilling.

For a multitude of examples, authorities, instances, and arguments, to show that this analysis of the so-called indeclinables in all languages is the only true and natural one, I must refer you to Horne Tooke's work itself—a work which no man, who takes any interest in the affairs of mankind, should be without. I believe there is now no scholar who does not admit that Horne Tooke's *system of language* is the *true one*. Observe, I say, his *system of language*—not his etymology of *particular words*—in which he is sometimes unquestionably wrong. After the lapse of so many centuries of time since the first invention of language, it is impossible to trace up every word to its original root, and its original signification. But he has perfectly succeeded in tracing up quite enow to establish the principle, that it is nothing but the lapse of time which prevents us from tracing up *all of them* to the same sources as those to which he has succeeded in tracing up most of them.

But there are two general arguments, *either* of which *alone* seems to me abundantly sufficient to prove that these pretendedly *unmeaning* words have, each of them, a distinct signification. For, if these conjunctions and prepositions be really *without meaning*, and only serve the *single purpose* of connecting sentences together, then *why several* prepositions and conjunctions? If, they serve but *one purpose*, why *more than one* preposition and conjunction? We do not require spoons of a dozen different shapes and patterns to eat our soup withal! Whether the soup be white or brown—mock-turtle, or real—still *one spoon* serves the purpose. And so would *one conjunction*, if it were true that conjunctions only serve the *one purpose* of connecting sentences. A note of interrogation serves the single purpose of denoting that a question is asked. Accordingly, we have but *one note* of interrogation, let the questions be as various as they may. And so, if conjunctions and prepositions were, like the note of interrogation, destitute of all meaning, and only served one purpose, viz., that of connecting sentences together, we should then have no more required *several* prepositions and conjunctions, than we do *several* notes of interrogation. To me this one argument is conclusive—for, in my mind, one good argument is as fully convincing as one hundred. But in case



you should be one of those who require to have the truth driven into your head, after the same fashion as that by which a nail is driven into a post, I will give you another equally strong. It is this. Nearly the whole, if not quite the whole, of our conjunctions and prepositions may be entirely dismissed from language without detriment to language, *provided only* that you supply their place with other words—but then these other words, in order that they may supply the place of the conjunctions and prepositions without detriment to the sense, *must have a meaning*. But if the conjunctions and prepositions had *no meaning*, then it is as clear as the sun at noon, that it could not be necessary that the words used to supply their place should have any meaning. For surely nothing can be clearer than that one *unmeaning* word is just as good as another *unmeaning* word! Thus the place of our so-called conjunction *if* may perfectly well be supplied by our verb to *suppose*, and yet the sense remain just the same, and just as intelligible as though the word *if* were used. For instance: “You tell me that *if* it be fine weather to-morrow you intend to go to York. But *suppose* it should rain—what shall you do then?” Now the sense here is manifestly the same, whether you say, “but *suppose* it should rain;” or, “*if* it should rain.” But *supposing* the word *if* to have *no meaning*, then its place might be supplied by any other word which has no meaning, and still the sense be preserved. Hobgoblin or Flibbertigibbet would answer the purpose just as well. But this is not the case. So our conjunction *unless* may have its place supplied by the verb *except*, and yet the sense be still preserved. “I shall go to York to-morrow, *unless* it rains;” or, “I shall go to York to-morrow, *except* it rains.” I say that, to all men who are open to conviction and untrammelled by prejudices, these two arguments are of themselves fully sufficient to prove that these so-called *unmeaning* words have, in reality, as good and definite a meaning as any other words under the sun. And so of the conjunction *and*—preposition, *with*, *without*, &c. &c.

I took up this morning at breakfast one of the numbers of the Encyclopædia published by “the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge;” and I was extremely gratified to find under the heads of *conjugation* and *conjunction*, Horne Tooke’s

views of language acknowledged and adopted. The article on conjunctions concludes thus: "many of the conjunctions defy all attempts at analysis, and certainly Horne Tooke, notwithstanding the acuteness *and truth of his general views*, has *occasionally* erred in the details of derivation." To be sure he has! Horne Tooke was a mortal man, not super-human. But of what consequence are the paltry details of mere derivation, excepting only to the mere pedagogue? It is the *principle*—the *system*—the *general view*—with which, and with which *alone*, philosophy is concerned. And if this be admitted—as it is by *all scholars*—if, I say, Horne Tooke's *system of language* be admitted, I care not two straws how often he has erred in his particular etymologies. His object was to *establish a principle*, in order that he might afterwards use that principle as a foundation whereon to build a future superstructure. His principle is now universally admitted. That is sufficient.

The *immediate* object of Horne Tooke's book may be explained in a few words by supposing a case. He first of all satisfied his own mind, by *a priori* reasoning, that there could not be in any language any words which were not the signs of things or sensations. Now suppose he had published this opinion. It would instantly have been answered: "you are wrong, Horne Tooke—manifestly and glaringly wrong—for there are many words in all languages, which it is universally agreed have no meaning—witness the conjunctions—witness the prepositions—witness the adverbs—witness the *abstract nouns*—witness the adjectives, &c. &c." Now then you have only to suppose that Horne Tooke did actually publish this his opinion, and that his opinion was thus actually replied to, and further that the *Diversions of Purley* were actually written in answer to this reply, with the view of proving that these so-called unmeaning words have really all of them a very good meaning, and therefore cannot be quoted as argument against his theory of language, and you will at once understand the true immediate purpose of Horne Tooke's *Epea Pteroenta*. The *Epea Pteroenta* were *not* written to prove his theory, but only to prove that these conjunctions, and prepositions, and abstract nouns, *could not be quoted as arguments against it*. He who looks upon Horne Tooke's

etymologies merely as so many proofs of Horne Tooke's theory, *does not understand Horne Tooke*.

So much for those words which are *necessary* to all languages. We now come to those which are not actually *necessary*—but which are nevertheless of eminent service as *abbreviations* employed for the sake of *dispatch* in the communication of our ideas.

“These terms are *generally* (I say, generally) participles or adjectives used without any substance to which they can be joined; and are therefore, in construction, considered as noun substances.” Thus the following words are neither more nor less than Latin past participles.

An act—is (aliquid) *act-um*, that is, (something) acted.

A fact—(aliquid) *fact-um*, that is, (something) done.

A debt—(aliquid) *debit-um*, that is, (something) due.

Rent—(aliquid) *rendit-um*, that is, (something) rendered.

Tribute—(aliquid) *tribut-um*, that is, (something) given.

An attribute—(aliquid) *attribut-um*, that is, (something) allotted to.

Incense—(aliquid) *incens-um*, that is, (something) burnt.

An expanse—(aliquid) *expans-um*, that is, (something) spread out.

All these are Latin words which we have adopted into our language whole and entire, only “omitting the Latin article *um*, and prefixing our own article *a*, *an*, or *the*, instead of it.” “It is of such words as these,” says Horne Tooke, “that the bulk of every language is composed. In English, those which are borrowed from the French, Latin, and Italian are easily recognised; because those languages are sufficiently familiar to us, and not so familiar as our own. Those from the Greek are more striking, because more unusual. But those which are original in our own language have been *almost wholly overlooked*, and are quite unsuspected. These words, these participles and adjectives, *not understood as such*, have caused a metaphysical jargon and a false morality, which can only be dissipated by etymology. And when they come to be examined, you will find that the ridicule which Dr. Conyers Middleton has justly bestowed upon the Papists for their absurd coinage of saints, is



equally applicable to ourselves and to all other metaphysicians, whose moral deities, moral causes, and moral qualities are not less ridiculously coined and imposed upon their followers. *Fate, destiny, luck, lot, chance, accident, heaven, hell, providence, prudence, innocence, substance, fiend, angel, apostle, saint, spirit, true, false, desert, merit, fault, &c. &c.* as well as *just, right, and wrong*, are merely participles *poetically embodied*, and *substantiated* by those who use them. The sham-deity *fate* is the Latin, (aliquid) *fat-um*—in English, (something) spoken or decreed. The sham-deity *destiny* is the French, (quelque chose) *destinée*—in English, (something) decreed—and are merely the past participles of the Latin verb *fari*, to speak, or decree, and the French verb *destiner* signifying the same thing. *Chance* and *accident* (twin brothers) are merely the past participles of *escheoir, cheoir*, and *cadere*, and signify *fallen out* or *happened*; and to say, “it befell me by *chance* or *accident*, is absurdly to say, it fell by falling.” *Providence, prudence, innocence, substance*, and all the rest of that tribe of qualities (in *ence* and *ance*) are merely the neuter plurals of the present participles *videntia, nocentia, stantia*, of the Latin verbs *videre*, to see; *nocere*, to injure; *stare*, to stand, &c. &c.

*Angel, saint, spirit*—are the past participles of *aggellein*, (pronounced *angellein*) *sanciri*, and *spirare*, to bear tidings, to confirm by law, to breathe.

*Cant, chaunt, accent, canto, cantata*—are the past participles of *canere*, to sing, or play upon an instrument; *cantare*, to sing, to praise, to speak often of a thing; and *chanter*, to sing or *chaunt*.

*Date*—is the Latin past participle *dat-um* (given) which was written by the Romans at the bottom of their epistles. In law documents, we still say, “*given* under our hand and seal.”

*Verdict*—is the Latin past participle *veredict-um*, i. e. *spoken according to the truth*.

*Interdict*—is the Latin past participle *interdict-um*, i. e. *spoken against or forbidden*.

See you not what an immense saving of time is effected by this abbreviated manner of speech? See you not how much

less time it requires to pronounce the single word *verdict*, than it does to utter *all the several words* of which that one word *verdict* is the sign?—viz., *spoken according to the truth*? See you not too what additional *force* and *compactness* language acquires by this short-hand manner of speaking?

*Post*—is the Latin past participle *posit-um*, and means (something) *placed*; and however used in English, whether as a noun, adjective, or adverb—whether as—a *post* in the ground—a military *post*—to take *post*—a *post* under government—the *post* for letters—*post-chaise*, or *post-horse*—to travel *post*—always signifies *something placed*. Thus, in our present situation, intelligence is conveyed by *post*; for whether it be by horses *placed* in relays, or by men *placed*, or fires *placed*, or telegraphs *placed*, or beacons of any kind—still it will always be by *posit*, or by *posts*, i. e. by *something placed*.

*Close*, a *close*, a *closet*, a *clause*, a *recluse*, a *shuice*, are all past participles of *claudere* and *clorre*, to shut in.

*Duct*, *aqueduct*, *conduct*, *produce*, *product*, *conduit*, are the past participles of the Latin *ducere*, and the French *conduire*, to lead or carry forward. *Fact*, *effect*, *defect*, *prefect*, *perfect*, *fit*, a *fit*, *feat*, a *feat*, *defect*, *counterfeit*, *surfeit*, *forfeit*, *benefit*, *profit*, are all past participles of *facere* and *faire*, to do—their several meanings being modified by other words prefixed to them. Thus *bene-fit* signifies *something* not only *done*, but *bene*, i. e. *well-done*. *Promise*, *compromise*, *committee*, *remiss*, *surmise*, *demise*, *epistle*, *apostle*, *sect*, *insect*, *time*, *atom*, *point*, *prompt*, *exempt*, *rate*, *remorse*, *morsel*, are all only so many past participles adopted into our language, and naturalized, from the Latin and Greek. So *tract*, *extract*, *contract*, *abstract*, *track*, *trace*, *trait*, (formerly written *traict*) *portrait*, (formerly written *pourtraict*) *treat*, *treaty*, *retreat*, *estreat*, are all so many past participles of the Latin verb *trahere*, and the French verb *traire*, to draw. *Event*, *convent*, *advent*, *venue*, *avenue*, *revenue*, *covenant*, are the past participles of *venire* and *venir*, to come. *Saute*, *assault*, *assailant*, *insult*, *result*, *somersault*, of *salire*, to leap. *Quest*, *inquest*, *request*, *conquest*, *requisite*, *perquisite*, are past participles of *querere*, to seek; and signify *that which is sought*. *Suit*,

*suite, pursuit, law-suit*, past participles of *suivre*, to follow, and signify that which is followed. For whole hosts of these words I must refer you to Horne Tooke's work. All these, coming as they do immediately from the Greek, Latin, Italian, and French, with scarcely any alteration, are clearly perceivable at first sight. But there are many others in the language which, having been more corrupted by time, and coming from a language not so well understood as the Greek, Latin, Italian, and French, (viz., the Anglo-Saxon) are not so easy recognizable, although not less certainly past participles, like those above mentioned, and employed by us in like manner for the sake of *abbreviation* and *dispatch* in writing and speaking. Thus :

*Brand*—in all its uses, is the past participle of the old English verb, to bren, i. e. to burn, and signifies *burned*.

*Odd*—is nothing more than the past participle *owed*, *ow'd*.

Thus, when we are counting by couples, or by pairs, we say—one pair, two pairs, &c. ; and one *owed*, *ow'd*, to make up another pair. It has the same meaning when we say an *odd* man. It still relates to *pairing* ; and we mean, *without a fellow, unmatched*, not such another, one *owed* to make up a couple.

*Head*—is *heaved*, *heav'd*, the past participle of *to heave*—meaning that part of the body which is *heav'd*, raised, or uplifted above the rest. In Edward the Third's time it was written *heved*.

*Wild*—is *willed*, *will'd*, (or self-willed) past participle of *to will*.

*Flood*—is *flowed*, *flow'd*.

*Loud*—is the past participle of *to low*, like oxen, *lowed*, *low'd*.

What we now write *loud* was formerly and more properly written *low'd*.

“ Who calls so *low'd*.”—*Shakspeare*.

“ And with *low'd* larums welcome them to Rome.”—*Shakspeare*.

*Shred*, *sherd*—past participle of *scyran*, to sheer, to cut off, and signify that which is cut off.

*Blind*—past participle of *blinnan*, to stop, and means that which is stopped.

*Bread*—past participle of *to bray*—and means that which is *brayed*.



*Field*—is past participle of *fællan*, to *fell*, and means land on which the trees have been *felled*. It was formerly written *feld*.

I can only give you the words. If you wish to see the examples and proofs, almost without number, together with examples of the manner of corruption, step by step, by which the old mode of spelling has been gradually laid aside and the present mode adopted, you must read Horne Tooke, and you will be abundantly satisfied.

*Fiend*—is not a *past* participle, but it is the *present* participle *fianð* of the Anglo-Saxon and Mæso-Gothic verb *fian*, to hate ; and means (some one, any one) *hating*.

*Friend*—in like manner, is the *present* participle *friand* of the Anglo-Saxon verb *frian*, to love, and means (some one, any one) *loving*.

*It*—our pronoun *it*—is merely the past participle of the Anglo-Saxon *hætan*, to name, and means *the named*, or *the said*. It was written *hit* by all our old English writers down to Elizabeth. Shakspeare so wrote it. In Anglo-Saxon it is written *hit*, *hyt*, and *hæt*. Our old word *hight*, i. e. *called*, is the same word. This meaning of the pronoun *it*, viz. *the said*, will perfectly correspond with every use of the pronoun *it* in our language.

*That*—the pronoun *that*—is in like manner the past participle of the verb *thean*, and means *taken*, *assumed*. *It* and *that* always refer to some thing or things, person or persons *taken*, *assumed*, or *spoken of*, before. See Horne Tooke for examples and proofs.

*The*—our article *the*, as it is called—is the imperative of the same verb *thean*, to *The*, to get, to take, to assume.

“ Ill mote he *The* (i. e. ill may he *get*)

That caused me

To make myself a frere.”—*Sir T. More*.

See Horne Tooke for examples of the manner of using this word *the*, so as to correspond with our use of the article *the*. But I must hurry on.

*Faint*—is the past participle of *fa nigean*, to fade, to wither, to pass away. That it does not end in *ed* or *'d* is no

objection ; for nothing is more common in English than the change of the participial terminating *d* into *t*.  
Thus—

*Joint*—is joined, join'd, joint.

*Feint*—is feigned, feign'd, feint. *Gift* is gived, giv'd, gift.  
*Rift* is rived, riv'd, rift.

*Cleft*—is cleaved, cleav'd, cleft. *Thrift* is thrived, thriv'd, thrift.  
*Shrift* is shrived, shriv'd, shrift. And so of multitudes of others.

*Haft*—is haved, hav'd, haft. *Hilt* is held, helt, hilt.

*Tight*—is tied, ti'd, tight. *Desert* is deserved, deserv'd, desert.  
*Twist* is twiced, twic'd, twist.

*Want*—is waned, wan'd, want, to fall away. *En*, as well as *ed*, is also a common participial termination, and our ancestors affixed either indifferently to any word. Sir Thomas More preferred *en* and wrote *understanden* ; Bishop Gardner preferred *ed*, and wrote *understanded*.

*Leaven*—from the French *lever*, to raise—is that by which the dough is raised. So the Anglo-Saxons called it *hafen*, the past participle of their own verb *heafan*, to raise. So *heaven* is (some place, any place) *heav-en* or *heav-ed*, i. e. upraised, *uplifted* above other places. The Scotch still employ the word *lift* to signify the *sky*. And we use the word *loft* for a *raised* room, as, a *hay-loft*.

*Bacon*—is evidently the past participle of *bacan*, to bake, or to dry by heat, and means hog's flesh dried by heat.

*Wrong*—is the past participle of *to wring*, and means that which is *wrung*, or *wrested* from the *right*—i. e. the right line of conduct.

*Barren*—i. e. barr-ed—means *stopped*, *shut*. You have already seen that our ancestors made their participles by adding either *en* or *ed* indifferently—sometimes one, sometimes the other—to the verb.

“For God thus plagued had the house  
Of Bimelech the king,

The matrix of them all were *stopt* (i. e. *barren*)

They might no issue bring.”—*Genesis*, by *W. Hunnis*.

Thus then you cannot fail to observe that words are never

used *arbitrarily*; but that there is a *reason in nature* why each particular word was chosen to be the sign of each particular thing. Thus *cud* signifies *chew'd*; and to chew the *cud* means, to chew the *chew'd*. This change of pronunciation, and consequently of writing, from *ch* to *k*, and from *k* to *ch*, is very common and frequent in our language.

*Hone*—*hones* are made of petrified wood; and *hone* is the past participle of *hænan*, *to become stone*; and *hone*, therefore, means that which has been *converted into stone*. And so also—

*Law*—anciently written *laugh*, *lagh*, *lage*, and *lay*,—is merely the past participle of the Gothic word *lagjan*, *to put, to place, to lay down*, and signifies (something, anything) *laid down*—as a rule of conduct. Thus also—

*Mad*—as well as its Italian equivalent *matto*—is merely *mætt*, *mæd*, (*d* for *t*—and the *æ* pronounced broad like *a* in *father*, as it always *was* pronounced) the past tense of the Anglo-Saxon verb *metan*, *to mete, to dream*. The verb *to mete* was formerly in common use, as we now use the verb *to dream*. A madman, therefore, is one who *dreams*. So—

*Born*—is merely the past participle of *bearan*, *to bear*. It was formerly written *boren*, and we now write the same word, only on different occasions, *borne*. *Born* is *borne* into the world, or *brought* into the world.

But besides prepositions, conjunctions and abstract nouns, there is yet another class of words to which the objectors to Horne Tooke's assertion, that "*that is not a word which is not the name of a thing or a sensation*," might have appealed, viz. the *concretes* as they are called, or *adjectives*. Accordingly he proceeds to show that these also are nothing but *nouns*, that is, the *names of things*. "I think," says he, "you will not deny that *gold*, and *brass*, and *silk*, are each of them the name of a thing. If then I say—a *gold*-ring, a *brass*-tube, a *silk*-string, here are noun substantives used after the manner of adjectives, yet which are still the names of things. If, again, I say—a *golden* ring, a *brazen* tube, a *silken* string; do *gold*, and *brass*, and *silk*, cease to be the names of things because, instead of coupling them with



*ring, tube, and string* by a hyphen, thus, - I choose rather to couple them with the same words by using the termination *en* for that purpose? Do not the adjectives (which I have made such by the *added termination*) *golden, brazen, silken*, (uttered by themselves) convey to the hearer's mind and denote the same things as *gold, brass, and silk*? Surely the *addition* of the termination *en* takes nothing away from the substantives *gold, brass, and silk*, by being *added to them* as a termination? And as surely it adds nothing to their signification but *this single circumstance*, viz. *that gold, brass, and silk*, are intended, by means of this termination *en*, to be *joined to some other substantive*. And we shall find hereafter that *en*, and the equivalent adjective terminations *ed* and *ig* (our modern *y*), convey all these, by their own intrinsic meaning, that very intention and nothing else; for they mean *give, add, join*. And this single added circumstance of "pertaining to," is (as Wilkins truly tells us) the only difference between an adjective and a substance—between *gold* and *golden*. In fact, therefore, the words *golden, brazen, silken*, are nothing but *gold-add, brass-give, silk-join*, that is, *give, add, or join* something else. So the adjectives *wood-en* and *wool-en* convey precisely the same meaning, and are the names of the same things as the substantives *wood* and *wool*; and the termination *en* puts them in a condition *to be joined* to some other substantive; or rather, it gives us notice that the speaker has not done speaking, but that he intends to *add* some other word to the one he has just uttered. Thus, if a man utter the word *silken*, and then stop, the natural question is, "*silken what?*" that is, "what other word are you going to *add* or *join*?" To which the answer might be, "handkerchief." And this is the whole mystery of simple adjectives. (We speak not here of compounds, as *ful, ous, ly, &c.*)

"An adjective is the *name of a thing* which is directed to be joined to some other *name of a thing*. And the substantive and adjective so joined, are frequently convertible without the smallest change of meaning: as we may say: a *perverse nature*, or, a *natural perversity*.

"Mr. Harris's method of understanding "*easily*" the nature of participles and adjectives, resembles very much that of the

wag who undertook to teach the sons of Crispin how to make a shoe or a slipper *easily*—in a minute. But he was more successful than Harris, for he had something to cut away, viz. the boot. Whereas Harris has nothing to be so served. For the verb does not denote any *time*, nor does it imply any *assertion*. No single word can. Till one single thing can be found to be a couple, one single word cannot make an *ad-sertion*, or an *ad-firmation*, for there is *joining* in that operation, and there can be no *junction of one thing*.”

It is true the Latin word *ibo* (*I will go*) is an assertion, and that too in *three letters*. But these three letters are, in fact, *three words*—two verbs and a pronoun.

“All those *common* terminations, in any language, of which all nouns or verbs in that language equally partake (under the notion of *declension* or *conjugation*), are themselves separate words, with distinct meanings, which are therefore added to the different nouns or verbs, because those additional circumstances are intended to be added occasionally to all those nouns or verbs. These terminations are all explicable, and ought all to be explained, or there will be no end of such phantastical writers as this Mr. Harris, who takes fustian for philosophy.

“In the Greek verb *I-enai* (to go)—in the Latin verb *I-re* (to go)—and in the English verb *to-hie*, or *to hi* (that is, to go), the infinitive terminations *enai* and *re* make no more part of the Greek and Latin verbs, than the infinitive prefix *to* makes a part of the English verb *hie* or *hi*. The pure and simple verbs, without any suffix or prefix, are in the Greek *I*, in the Latin *I*, and in the English *hie* or *hi*. These verbs, you see, are *the same*, with the *same meaning*, in the three languages; and differ only by our aspirate, the *h*.

“In the Greek *boul-omai*, (to will) or (as anciently written) *boul-eo*, or *boulo*—*boul* only is the verb, *omai* or *eo* is a common removeable suffix with a separate meaning of its own. So in the Latin *vol-o*, (to will) *vol* is the verb, and *o* a common removeable suffix with a meaning of its own. And the meaning of *eo* in the one, and *o* in the other, I take to be *ego*, (I); for I perfectly concur with Dr. Gregory Sharpe and others, that the personal pronouns are contained in the Greek and Latin termi-

nations of the three persons of their verbs. Our English *ich* or *ig* (which we now pronounce *I*) is not far removed from *ego*.

“Where we now use *will*, our old English word was *wol*, which is the pure verb without prefix or suffix.

“This word *ibo*, then, uncontracted, will stand thus in the three languages—only inverting our common order of speech, in order to suit that of the Greek and Latin.

English      *hi wol ich*—i. e. *go will I*, or *I will go*.

Latin        *I vol o*—i. e. *go will I*, or *I will go*.

Greek        *I boul eo*—i. e. *go will I*, or *I will go*.

Those who have noticed that where we employ *w*, the Latins employed a *v*; and where the Latins employed a *v*, the Greeks used a *b*, (as *Dabid*, *Bespasianos*, &c.) will see at once that *wol*, *vol*, *boul*, are one and the same word. And the progress to *ibo* is not very circuitous nor unnatural. It is *iboul*, *ibou*, *ibo*. The termination *bo* (for *bouleo*, I will) may therefore well be applied to denote the future time of the Latin verbs, since its meaning is *I woll* (or will). So *amabo* (I will love) is *amaboul*, *amabou*, *amabo*. Anciently the Romans said *audi-bo* (I will hear), then they said *audi-am* (I will hear), and now they (that is, the Italians) say *udir-ò*—i. e.

Audi(re) *volo*—I *will* to hear.

Audi(re) *amo*—I *desire* to hear.

Udir(e) *ho*—I *have* to hear.”

B.

I suppose, then, that you had this word *ibo* in your mind, when you said that not only every word in a language has a meaning, but also every *letter* even.

A.

I certainly had this word *ibo* in my mind at that time, and many more of a like kind; but I had something else in my mind besides.

I was insisting that there is nothing arbitrary in language; but that there is always a *reason* why each particular word was chosen as the representative of that particular thing which it signifies—that there is a meaning inherent in the word, and a connection between that meaning and the word, which constitutes the reason why that word was chosen in preference to



others in order to convey that meaning. And this is true even of the individual letters of the alphabet. They were not adopted *arbitrarily*. There is a *reason* why each letter has the particular form which we see *it has*, and also why it has the particular name by which it is called. This is not indeed *discoverable* in our *modern* alphabets, but it is readily so in the older alphabets of which probably all the others are corruptions. The names of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and also of the Runic, it is well known, are likewise the names of *things*. Thus the first letter, *aleph*, of the Hebrew, signifies an *ox*, and the letter *mem* signifies *water*, &c. But this is not all. For the letters themselves are merely all that corruption, and haste, and carelessness in the writers, have left us of real drawings, pictorial delineations, of the things which they represented. Thus, in the Phenician alphabet, (a more ancient form of the Hebrew) the first letter, that is, the Hebrew *aleph*, which I have just said signifies an ox, is by no means a bad representation of an ox's head with the horns and ears. And in the Etruscan alphabet, (probably a still *more ancient* form of the Hebrew) the letter answering to the Hebrew *mem*, which I have said signifies *water*, is merely a waving line—a very common and natural symbol of water, and, no doubt, intended to imitate undulation—that waving and uneven appearance presented by water when its surface is rippled by a slight wind. In fact, letters are real hieroglyphics, or rather the fragments of hieroglyphics—all that time, corruption, and the hurry and carelessness of transcribers, have left. If we were to begin to use hieroglyphic characters again, it would soon happen, in the hurry of writing, that the picture of a house would be so rudely and imperfectly drawn, as scarcely to resemble a house at all. And, in the lapse of time, it is quite probable that all that would be left of the original picture of a house, would be a single chimney—and that single chimney would be sufficient. Constant use would easily preserve the connection between that corrupted and fragmental sign and the idea of a house.

But to return to the adjectives. “I maintain,” says Horne Tooke, “that the adjective is *equally* and *altogether as much* the *name of a thing*, as the noun substantive, and so I say of *all*

*words whatever.* For that is *not a word* which is not the *name of a thing*.

“That an adjective cannot stand by itself, but must be joined to some other noun, does not proceed from any difference in the nature of the idea or thing of which the adjective is the sign; but from hence, that having added to the sign of an idea that change of termination which, by agreement or common acceptance, signifies that it is to be joined to some other sign, the hearer or reader expects that other sign which the adjective termination announces. For the adjective termination of the sign sufficiently informs him that the sign, when *thus adjoined*, is not to be used by itself or to stand alone, but is to be joined to some other term. It is therefore well called *noun adjective*—(that is, *name that may be added*)—for it is the *name of a thing*, which may be joined to *another name of a thing*.

“If in what I have said of the adjective I have expressed myself clearly and satisfactorily, you will easily observe that *adjectives*, though convenient abbreviations, are *not necessary* to language. And perhaps you will perceive in the misapprehension of this useful and simple contrivance of language, one of the foundations of those heaps of false philosophy with which we have been bewildered.

“Those adjectives terminating in *ly, ous, ful, some, les, ish*, are all *compound* words, the termination being originally a word added to those other words, of which it now seems merely the termination; though it still retains its original and distinct signification.”

#### B.

Does Horne Tooke give any instance of a language entirely destitute of adjectives?

#### A.

There is no necessity for any such instance. General reasoning alone is quite sufficient to prove to any thinking man that *adjectives* are not *necessary* to a language, although they are extremely useful. One name of a thing uttered quickly after another name of a thing, as in fact we are still frequently in the habit of doing, would serve the purpose of the adjective. Thus we say *a gold-watch, sea-weed, ivory-wand, shell-fish, river-god*,

&c. &c. Nevertheless, to satisfy those who either cannot or will not use their own reason, he does give an instance. He quotes a work by Dr. Jonathan Edwards, D. D. Pastor of a church in New-Haven. The work is called, "Observations on the Language of the *Muhhekaneew* Indians, communicated to the Connecticut Society of Arts and Sciences; published at the request of the Society, and printed by Josiah Meigs, 1788." The Doctor happened to be brought up entirely in the society of Indians. While himself a boy, Indian boys were his only play-mates. Their language, he says, was more familiar to him than his mother tongue. And the Doctor declares, "The Mohegans have no *adjectives* in all their language. Although it may at first seem not only singular and curious, but impossible, that a language should exist without adjectives, yet it is an indubitable fact."

The words in *ble* we have taken from the French, who took them corruptly from the Italian. Our Anglo-Saxon *full*, which with the Germans is *vol*, became the Italian *vole*. Hence the Italian words *abominevole*, *comfortevole*, &c. &c., were corrupted by the French into *abominable*, *comfortable*, &c.

In this manner our own word *full* (passing through the German, Italian, and French) comes back to us again under the corrupt shape of *ble*.

Our English word *able* is the Gothic *abal*, which signifies strength.

The terminations *ive* and *ic*, are Latin and Greek words also, denoting *strength*.

I have now attempted to give you some idea (and it is an exceedingly meagre one) of the nature of Horne Tooke's great work, and of the manner in which he proves that there is nothing in language itself which is hostile to his assertion that "every word in all languages must necessarily be the name of a thing or things," sensation or sensations; but, on the contrary, that it contains everything to confirm it. And, if this be true, the absurd doctrine of abstraction—of those *ignes fatui*, those will-o'-th'-wisps, called abstract ideas, is scattered to the winds in a moment. If you be still sceptical, then I earnestly recommend you to give one hour a-day to the attentive perusal



of the Diversions of Purley, and you will be fully satisfied, and richly, most richly rewarded. The book is a whole philosophical library in itself.

The consequences to which this exposition and explosion of the ridiculous and even childish doctrine of abstraction lead, are manifest and inevitable. For it lays every man under the necessity, if he be called upon, to inform his hearers or readers of what sensation any particular word which he uses is the sign. If a hearer declare that he *has not in him* any one particular sensation represented, or intended to be represented, by any one particular word, then the speaker is under an obligation to *put it in him*. But this cannot be done by words. If I, in discourse, make use of the word *rondelesia*, I am under an obligation, if required, to explain the meaning of that word. If I be asked to do this—if I be asked of what sensation *rondelesia* is the sign, I may reply that it is the name of a particular odor. But if I be required further to put into my hearer that *particular* idea, or sensation, or odor, of which that word is the sign, this also I can do—but not by words—but I can do it, and I can *only* do it, by submitting to his organ of smell that particular *substance* which emits that *particular odor*. And so if a man make use of a word as the sign or name of a visible object, the sensation or idea of which is not in my mind, that word must be unintelligible to me, until he has put the idea into my mind, either by *showing me the object*, or by *drawing it on paper*. If it be the name of a sound, he can only make me understand the meaning of the word—that is, he can only put into me the sensation indicated by the word—by imitating that sound with his voice, or by taking me where I may hear it. And so on of all sensations, saving only those which result from the nature of animal organization, and which we have in common with the brutes—I mean the animal instincts. But as these instincts form a part of the very nature of all men, all men must have them, and therefore cannot require them to be put into them; and all words, therefore, which, by common consent, stand as the signs of these sensations, must always be intelligible. If a man use a word whose meaning I do not understand, I therefore ask him: “is it the name of an instinct?” No. “Of a flavor?”

No. "Of an odor?" No. "Of any of those sensations which we receive through the sense of touch?" No. "Is it a sound?" No. "A visible object?" No. "Is it the name of anything that can be appreciated by any one of the five senses?" No. Then I say with Horne Tooke, "*that word is not a word at all.*" For it cannot by possibility serve as an instrument for the communication of knowledge, but must for ever remain wholly unintelligible. It may be the sign of a sensation existing in him who uses it—but it can manifestly have no power whatever of putting that sensation into me. But suppose, for a moment, it was used as the sign of one of those sensations which we call flavors—the flavor of some remarkable foreign fruit—can the utterance of that word put the flavor, or the remembrance of that flavor, into me? Certainly not—nothing on earth can do that but the fruit itself.

But there is one more class of words to which I must call your attention. They chiefly end in *th*. These are *generally* the third persons singular indicative of verbs which you know end in *th*, as *loveth*, *fighteth*, *heareth*, *singeth*, &c. &c. The words which I am about to mention are another source of what have been so absurdly called *abstract nouns*—and form a beautiful example of that *abbreviated manner of speech* which mankind, as soon as they have made any progress towards civilization, are compelled to adopt for the sake of *dispatch*. Each of these words stands for a whole sentence.

*Girth*—signifies that which *girdeth*, *gird'th*, *girth*.

*Warmth*—that which *warmeth*, *warm'th*, *warmth*.

*Filth*—whatsoever *fileth*.

*Wealth*—that which enricheth—from *welegian*, to enrich.

*Health*—that which causeth one to be *hale* or *whole*.

*Growth*—that which *groweth*.

*Drought*—That which *dryeth*.

*Strength*—that which *stringeth* or maketh one to be *strong*.

*Mouth*—that which *feedeth*—from *matjan*, to feed.

*Tooth*—that which *tuggeth*—from *teogan*, to tug.

*Faith*—that which one covenanteth or engageth. It was formerly written *faieth*.

"Saint Paule speaketh of them, where he writeth that the

tyme should come when some erring in the *faieth*, shoulde prohibite mariage.”—*Dr. Martin of priestes’ unlaful mariages.*

“In Sainct Gregorie’s daies, at whose handes Englande was learned the *faieth* of Christ.”

*Smith*—one who *smitheth*, i. e. with the hammer. This name was given to all who *smote* with the hammer. What we now call a *carpenter* was also anciently called a *smith*. The French word *carpenter* was not introduced until about the reign of Edward the Third.

*Stealth*—the manner by which one *stealeth*.

*Earth*—that which one *ereth*, or *eareth*, i. e. plougheth. It is the third singular indicative of *erian*, to *ere*, to *eare*, to plough.

“He that *erith*, owith to *ere* in hope.”—1 *Corinthies*, ix.

“I have an halfe acre to *erie* by the hygh waye.

Had I *eried* thy halfe acre, and sowed it after,

I woulde wend wyth you.”—*Vis. of P. Ploughman.*

*Ought*—that which one *oweth*, i. e. to himself or others.

*Light*—which the Anglo-Saxons wrote *leohteth*, *leohtth*, and *leoht*—is the third person indicative of *leohtan*, to illuminate—that which illuminateth.

“What is *truth*? You know when Pilate had asked the same question, he went out and would not stay for the answer. And from that time to this, mankind have been wrangling and tearing each other to pieces for the *truth*, without once considering the meaning of the word.” It was formerly written *troweth*, *trowth*, *trouth*, and *troth*—and means *that which one troweth or thinketh*. *True*, as we now write it, or *trew*, as it was formerly written, means simply and merely that which is *trowed*. As the verbs to *blow*, *crow*, *grow*, *know*, *throw*, give us *blew*, *crew*, *grew*, *knew*, *threw*; so the verb to *trow*, gave us *trew* for its past tense, which past tense the Anglo-Saxons constantly used as we now use a past participle. The word was perpetually written *trew*, by all our ancient authors, in prose and verse, from the time of Edward the Third to Edward the Sixth.

That every man in his communication with others should speak that which he *troweth*, is of so great importance to mankind, that it ought not to surprise us, if we find the most



extravagant and exaggerated praises bestowed upon *truth*. But there is manifestly no such thing as eternal and immutable truth, as it is sometimes called. Two persons may contradict each other, and yet both speak the truth; for that which one man *troweth*, i. e. thinketh, may be directly opposite to that which another man *troweth*, or thinketh. To speak the *truth* may be a vice as well a virtue; for there are many occasions when we ought not to speak *that which we trow*.

What is that then for which mankind have been quarrelling ever since the days of Pontius Pilate? You see what it is—*that which one troweth*.

“But I think I need proceed no farther in this course; and that I have already said enough, perhaps too much, to show what sort of *operation* that is which has been called *abstraction*.” It is an operation, not of the mind, but of language.

When Rabelais was dying, he said he was going in search of a great *May-Be*. The martyrs of all countries who have died for what they called the *truth*, have voluntarily suffered death for a *Me-Thinks*.

Truly says one of the writers for the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge: “The majority of mankind pay an habitual veneration to words, and this species of adoration is not exempt from fanaticism. It would not be difficult to find men who would willingly suffer any privations and tortures, and even death, *for the sake of certain words*. \* \* \* \* And it is almost always for want of attaching the *same ideas* to the *same words* that men misunderstand each other, dispute, and sometimes come to blows.”

### B.

I have observed that, although you have asserted that all words are merely the names of *sensations*, yet have you often, while speaking, called them the *names of things*. How is this?

### A.

Because, whenever we speak of a *thing*, we do, in fact, always mean the *sensation* which that thing communicates to our organs, and nothing else. For the *sensations* communicated by *things* are all that we know, or ever can know, of the *things themselves*.

B.

But it does not appear to me that you have yet proved that all these words which you have selected from Horne Tooke, as evidences against the doctrine of abstraction, are the names either of *things* or *sensations*.

A.

Indeed! Be good enough to mention one.

B.

I will mention a very common one—the word *fact* for instance. Is *fact* the name of a thing?

A.

Yes, indeed is it—the name of several *things*. It signifies, you know, something, anything, *done*.

B.

Something, anything, *done*! Well, but what is that something? For to say that it is the name of *something*, *anything*, seems to me pretty much the same as saying that it is the name of nothing.

A.

But I did not say *merely* that it is the name of *something*, but of something *done*. Pray tell me, is the word *tree* the name of a thing?

B.

Undoubtedly.

A.

Of which of all those particular things which we call *trees* is it the name?

B.

Of no one in particular. It is a general term.

A.

To be sure it is—and it is the name of *some* tree, *any* tree—just as *fact* is the name of *something*, *anything*, *acted upon* by *something*, *anything* else. But what the particular *thing* is, which has been acted upon, and what the particular agent which has acted upon it, is not determined, any more than the particular tree is determined by the general term *tree*. When you pronounce the word *tree*, and pause—the ideas of a multitude of trees will pass through your mind. And the word *tree* is the

name of all, or any of them, but of no one in particular. When you pronounce the word *fact*, or the words *something done*, and pause—there will pass through your mind the ideas of a multitude of things which you have seen *done*—accidents which you have seen happen—a *glass broken*, a *coach overturned*, the *door shut*, the *box opened*, &c. The word *fact*, or the phrase *something done*, (of which the word *fact* is the immediate sign) is the name of all, or of any one of these things which you have seen *done*, but of no one in particular. Tell me, if I ask you to draw upon paper the representation of a *tree*, cannot you do so?

B.

Certainly. And I should probably draw that tree with which I happened to be most familiar, or which I fancied I could draw most easily.

A.

And cannot you draw a *fact* upon paper?

B.

No. I cannot draw an action.

A.

Cannot you draw *something done* upon paper?

B.

Indeed I cannot. If I could draw on paper a *something done*, I could draw a *fact* upon paper, since they both mean the same thing.

A.

Cannot you draw upon paper a *glass broken*, that is, a *broken glass*?

B.

Yes—I can certainly do that.

A.

And is not a *glass broken* a *something done*, i. e. a *fact*? Evidently it is so. But *something done* is a *general* term, like the word *tree*; whereas a *glass broken*, or an *ox slaughtered*, i. e. a *broken glass*, or a *slaughtered ox*, is a *particular* term, defining the *particular* action, and the *particular* object affected by that action; just as the word *poplar*, or *oak*, or *elm*, is a *particular* term, defining a *particular* tree. The phrase *something done* signifies some one *thing* which has been altered in appearance,



(or otherwise affected) by some other *thing*; and when you draw upon paper the representation of a *thing altered from its natural condition*, you do in reality draw a *thing* which has *been done*, i. e. a *thing which has been acted upon, whose former condition has been altered*; in a word, *something done*, or a *fact*.

The word *truth*, whenever in modern writers it has a meaning at all, is always a mere substitution for some other word, and frequently for this very word *fact*. And it is this licentious substitution of one word for another which has had so large a share in confusing language, and confounding the common sense of mankind.

In reading, or talking, we are not conscious, certainly, of the presence of these pictures or drawings in our minds *individually*, but they all help to make up a larger group of ideas which enter the mind at once, together. A whole sentence (if it be not too long) may be very justly likened to *one long word* which suggests to the mind *one very large group of ideas*, all at once, just as the word *field* suggests to the mind a multitude of ideas constituting what we call a field, and consisting of grass, flowers, hedges, and probably cattle grazing in it, altogether and at once—or as the word *town* suggests at once to the mind a multitude of houses, streets, churches, people, &c. But every word in the sentence, nevertheless, if uttered slowly, will be found to bring before the mind one or more of the individual ideas which help to make up the whole group—or rather, every word is the name of a smaller, which helps to make up the larger, group. It must be so; otherwise those words which were the names of nothing, or which suggested nothing, might be left out of the sentence, and the sense remain unaltered.

All cultivated languages are *abbreviated* languages, and the abbreviations require to be explained before they can be understood, or used to communicate knowledge; just as short-hand is an abbreviated *written* language, whose abbreviated signs must be understood before they can convey to us any knowledge—before we can understand short-hand. If a man does not understand the meaning of these abbreviated forms of speech, such as *intellect*, *truth*, &c., he is, when he reads, in the condition of an uneducated person who, in every second or third line of his

book, meets with a Greek or Latin word. Before he can properly understand clearly what he is reading, these Greek and Latin words must be translated into *the words which they stand for* in his own language. And so, before a man can understand what he is reading or hearing, he must translate these *abbreviated* expressions into *the words which they stand for*, as he goes along. If he do not this, the most senseless unmeaning trash will be perpetually imposed upon him for common sense, and sound philosophy. Oh ! if we did but pay the same attention to language, in matters of philosophy, as we never fail to do in all matters of pounds, shillings, and pence, what a miraculous change would be wrought in the opinions and conduct of mankind in a moment ! If we were as determined to have things in exchange for words as we are to have gold in exchange for paper, how soon should we become rich in knowledge.

Whenever you meet, therefore, with one of these *abbreviated* forms of speech, if you would not have “fustian” palmed upon you for “philosophy,” *always translate it*, just as you would do a Greek or Latin word, *into the words which it stands for*.

Formerly, the only mode of communicating knowledge, or ideas, or sensations, in writing, was the hieroglyphic, or, more properly, *pictorial*. But I maintain *that all language whatever*, whether *written* or *spoken*, is, in reality, *pictorial*. Anciently they delineated pictures, and presented them to the eye. What we now do is merely this—we do not draw the pictures on paper certainly ; but, having seen *the pictures in nature*, and having given *names* to them, the utterance of those names causes us to *remember the pictures*.

B.

But this can only apply to *visible* things.

A.

True. But the organs of hearing, of touch, of taste, and of smell, altogether, furnish us with so minute a portion of knowledge, when compared with that which we derive from the organs of sight, that it is scarcely worth while to mention it. But though the sensations furnished us by the ear, the skin, the nose, the palate cannot, in strict propriety, be called pictures, yet are they, like the ideal pictures just mentioned, sensations *caused to*

*be remembered* by the utterance of their names. These, I say, though all highly important to the well-being of man, numerically considered, are as nothing when compared with those multitudinous hosts of sensations or ideas which we acquire through the eye.

It must be further considered, also, that all those sensations which we derive through the ear, the skin, the nose, and palate, are precisely the same, and scarcely more numerous than those acquired by the horse or the dog, through the same organs. All those ideas or sensations which we acquire through the skin, the ear, the palate, the nose, may be equally well acquired by the dog as by his master. There is no odor, no flavor, no sound, no sensation of the skin, such as hardness, softness, roughness, smoothness, heat, cold, pain, &c. &c. which may not manifestly be equally as well acquired by the dog as by man. The internal sensations, too—the animal instincts, appetites, and passions—are precisely the same in man as in the brute.

Our superiority of knowledge, therefore—all that part of our knowledge which we possess, but which the dog never can possess—all those sensations or ideas which are unattainable by the mere animal, consists of those ideas or sensations solely which we derive through the eye. And the reason why these sensations or ideas of visible objects are so multiplied in man, and his reasoning power so much greater, I have already shown, is owing to his faculty of speech (chiefly), and the organization of the human hand. That part of our knowledge, too, which relates to human appetites and propensities—even this we acquire by observing the effects which we *see* them produce.

With this insignificant exception, therefore, of those sensations which we derive through the ear, the skin, the palate, and the nose, I must beg to be understood, when I repeat, that all language, whether written or spoken, in every country of the earth, is, though not in actual reality, yet *virtually and in effect*, strictly pictorial. And I further assert, that no language which is not, in this manner, *pictorial*, can be other than an unintelligible jargon. For the nature of man, the nature of words, and the nature of things, prove that it *must be so*.



Phonetic and literal language possess two advantages over the pictorial of the Egyptians—and *only two*. It also possesses *one stupendous disadvantage*. One of the advantages of literal and phonetic language is this. A sensation derived *not through the eye*, could only be represented pictorially by drawing that visible object most remarkable for producing that sensation. Thus the sensation of *cold* could only be represented by drawing *snow* or *ice*. And it would not always be clear whether *this object itself* were intended, or the *sensation* which that object was known constantly to produce. For the same reason they could not represent a body in motion. But in *modern language* we have one name for the object, and another for the sensation—or rather, we have two *different names* for the two *different sensations* produced by one object—one for the sensation produced on the nerves of the *skin*, and another for the sensation produced on the *eye*—and this sort of obscurity is avoided. The other advantage, and it is, as society is now constituted, a most important one, is dispatch.

The great disadvantage is, that, being more complicated, and not properly understood, it has been productive of a large amount of human error, and therefore human misery.

B.

The manner in which you have explained the meaning of the word *truth*—

A.

It is not I who have explained its meaning. It was Horne Tooke who cracked that nut, and showed that it contained nothing but a *Me-Thinks* for its kernel. He has gone to the tomb of his fathers. But he has left his crackers behind him; and, borrowing these crackers, I now proceed to apply them to other moral and political, but chiefly political, nuts. I proceed to trace Horne Tooke's principle of language up to its inevitable consequences. I will at all events, *attempt* to complete, as far as my time and other occupations will allow, Horne Tooke's uncompleted philosophy—the which if I can do, to any extent, I shall render, says the Examiner, “good service.” But the Examiner sometimes writes in so great a hurry that I fear he is not always aware of the full extent of that which he says.

In my dedication I have asserted that the history of the ancients "is a fable, and their philosophy a farce;" and that no sound philosophy can be derived from the study of them, excepting only certain *scientific* facts to some of which I have there alluded. This assertion, the Examiner says, he is privileged to call "stupid," and he expressly declares that he has derived that privilege from the study of the ancients. I hope this is not the only privilege which the Examiner has derived from that source. Because he needed not have travelled so far as Greece and Rome to have acquired the privilege of calling names. He might have acquired it much nearer home, and also the most approved manner of exercising it.

When I said that the history of the ancients "is a fable," I was speaking and thinking of the ancients only. I now, however, repeat the assertion; and add, that not only *ancient* history, but all history whatever, (with the single exception of *sacred history*) whether ancient or modern, is, and must necessarily be, fabulous. But the Examiner wrote in so great a hurry, and *thought* so little about what he was writing, that he entirely forgot to distinguish between history and chronology. If by history he understand merely the arrangement of certain facts and events under their respective dates, then, I say, this belongs to the province of chronology—a province so far from being identical with that of history, that it has been found necessary to give it a different name, for the very purpose of distinguishing it from history, and of preventing the very thing which the Examiner has done—confounding the two together. History *affects* to do much more than this. It affects to make us acquainted with *human motives*, the *principles of human actions*, the *characters* of celebrated men. But in case the Examiner should deny that this is peculiarly the province of history, I will give him such an authority for it as *he especially* shall not dare to dispute—the authority of one who was both a great statesman and a great lawyer, both a philosopher and a scholar, but moreover, and above all, one among the *most celebrated* of the Examiner's favourite *ancients*—the authority of *Marcus Tullius Cicero*. "It is the first law of history," says Cicero, "that the writer should neither dare to advance what is

false, nor to suppress what is true ; that he should relate the facts with strict impartiality, free from ill-will or favor ; that his narrative should distinguish the order of time, and, when necessary, give the description of places ; *that he should UNFOLD THE STATESMAN'S MOTIVES, and in his account of the transactions and the events INTERPOSE HIS OWN JUDGMENT ; and should not only relate what was done, but how it was done ;* AND WHAT SHARE CHANCE, OR RASHNESS, OR PRUDENCE, HAD IN THE ISSUE ; *that he should give the characters of leading men, their weight and influence, their passions, their principles, and their conduct through life."*

Now, I say that no human being (not being inspired) can by any possibility "*unfold the motives*" of another—that no merely human being can tell "*what share chance, or rashness, or prudence,*" has had in any "*issue*" whatever. I say, moreover, that he who "*interposes his own judgment*" does but give a human, and therefore a fallible, opinion, which *may* be right, or *may* be wrong—and that there is scarcely any "*leading man*"—I think I might say, *not one*—about whose "*character*" all historians perfectly agree. And if *all historians* do not agree about a man's character, then that character remains, to the present day, *doubtful*, that is, *fabulous*. And if *doubtful*, I herewith ask the Examiner, what sort of philosophy that must be which is built on a *doubtful foundation* ? I will tell the Examiner what sort of philosophy it must be. It must and can be only that sort of philosophy which gives men the "*privilege*" of calling names. For the word *fabulous* does not mean false. It means merely *doubtful*. The word *fable* means simply a *relation, without any reference to its truth or falsehood*, and therefore leaving it wholly undetermined whether that relation be true or false—in a word, leaving its truth or falsehood *doubtful*. Nor is this a forced meaning of my own. It is the meaning given even by the dictionaries. If the Examiner will refer to Dr. Adam Littleton's Latin dictionary for the word *fabula*, he will find its meaning given in the following words: "*A fable—a story, whether true or false.*" The very etymology of the word shows its meaning—coming, as it does, from *fabulor*, the diminutive of *for*, which signifies simply to *speak*, whether that which is spoken be *true or false*.



Again, therefore, I assert that all history whatever, pretending, as it peculiarly does, to unfold human motives—to record the principles of human actions—to decide what share chance has had in any issue—is *fabulous*—that is *doubtful*—and cannot be made the foundation of a sure philosophy. Brutus stabbed Cæsar in the senate-house. Some say his motive was one of pure patriotism, others say envy and hatred of Cæsar's popularity formed his principle of action. Will the Examiner undertake to place this question beyond the reach of doubt? Appius Claudius Pulcher degraded Sallust from his senatorial rank. Some say it was on account of Sallust's amour with Fausta, the daughter of Sylla, and wife of Milo. But others say he did it in order to conciliate the favor of Cicero. Will the Examiner set *this* question at rest? The poet Ovid was banished from the court of Augustus. Will the examiner tell us for what? To come nearer our own times, will the Examiner set at rest for ever all the disputes about the real character of Mary Queen of Scotland? Will he "*unfold the motives*" of Elizabeth of England in putting her to death? Some say they were warrantably politic—some say she was jealous of Mary's beauty—others that it was all a mistake. To come still nearer our own times, was Caroline of England *undoubtedly* innocent or guilty? But why heap instance on instance? What are the newspapers of Tuesday but the histories of Monday? Do they agree in their accounts of the "principles of action," "the motives," the "characters," of the "leading men" of the present day? Can the accounts given in any one paper of the principles of action of any one statesman be relied on as *undoubted*? And if we cannot rely on the histories written to-day of actions and events which happened yesterday, beyond the mere record and date of their occurrence, how can we put undoubting faith in those which were written hundreds of years ago, of motives, and principles of action and characters, which existed hundreds of years *before that*? Even that portion of history founded on the accidental discovery of private letters is doubtful, and cannot be relied on. For what more common, than for men to disguise their real motives even from their most intimate friends? Nay, even from themselves? All beyond the mere record of dates,

names, places, and events, is doubtful, untrustworthy, fabulous—a traditionary tale, colored and modified by the passions, and prejudices, and party politics of him who tells it. Had Milton written a history of the life and reign and character of Charles the First, and of the life and reign and Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, would it have agreed with the account given of the same, in a history written by such a man as Dr. Samuel Johnson? The Examiner must know that the two accounts would have been as opposite as light to darkness. Has the Examiner read the history of England by Hume and Smollet? Yes—undoubtedly. But has he also read Dr. Lingard's? Let him compare the two. Again—how many of the political acts of the reign of Charles the Second had their origin in the *concealed* back-stairs influence of intriguing courtiers, and how many in the smiles and wiles, the frowns and fascinations, of Charles's favourite mistresses? Can the Examiner tell? Can any *historian* tell? Can the Examiner, or any historian, measure out and determine how much of the events in France, during the *reigns* of the Marchioness de Pompadour, and Madame de Maintenon, was owing to the *secret* influence of those ladies? How much to the “passions” and caprices of their kingly lovers? How much was effected solely by the “prudence” of legislators? And how much by “chance?”

As to that part of my assertion which declares that the philosophy of the ancients is a farce, I cannot suppose that the Examiner meant to object to *that*; and therefore, I have nothing more to say upon *that* subject.

The reply I have here given to the Examiner will serve also for the Spectator.

But the Spectator assures his readers that my style is “flip-pant.” Well, be it so—since the Spectator says it is, let it be conceded at once that it is so—I am sure I have no objection. But would the Spectator have a man, who is talking with his friend, by his own fire-side, speak after the manner of an epic poet? or in the style of “Paul Preaching”? But there is one thing I am very anxious to know—and that is, what in the world the Spectator, or his readers, or my readers, have to do with my style? For my own part, I never care three straws

about the style of any book. I only look to the matter. If the matter be good, the manner cannot make it bad—and if the matter be bad, the manner cannot make it good. “Oh! there is a *husk and shell*, Yorick, which grows up with learning, which their unskilfulness knows not how to throw away. *Sciences may be learned by rote, but wisdom not.*” The husks and shells, therefore, I bequeath to the Spectator—the kernels to my readers. But, notwithstanding my long quotations from Lord Bacon, John Locke, Horne Tooke, Bishop Wilkins, I am, says the Spectator, “self sufficient”—that is to say, I see with my own eyes, and not other people’s. Would that the Spectator, and everybody else, would do the same! But I speak too confidently! If a man do not feel confident that what he says is right, surely he had much better hold his tongue. And if he do feel confident—if there be a confidence in his heart which he denies with his tongue—such diffidence is mere hypocrisy, and a vile pandering to the self-love of mankind—it is putting a thief into “their heads to steal away their brains.” I leave such policy to the improving purists, the intellectualizing perfectionists, the political schoolmasters, the moral pedagogues, of the present day. When I am staring with both my eyes at St. Paul’s Cathedral, if a man ask me what I see, I answer honestly, at once—“I see a church, sir.” But the Spectator would have me say, “I believe—I speak with all deference—but it is certainly my opinion—that I see what *seems to be*—a church, sir.”

Such is the criticism of the Spectator. It is what Sterne would call the “stop-watch” criticism. “And how did Garrick speak the soliloquy last night?—Oh! against all rule, my Lord, most ungrammatically! Betwixt the nominative case and the verb he suspended his voice, a dozen times, three seconds and three-fifths, by a stop-watch, my Lord, each time. Admirable grammarian! But in suspending his voice, was the sense suspended likewise? Did no expression of countenance fill up the chasm? Was the eye silent? Did you narrowly look?—I looked only at the stop-watch, my Lord. Excellent observer! And what of this new book the whole world makes such a rout about? Oh! it is out of all plumb, my Lord—I had my rule and compasses in my pocket, &c.—Excellent critic!”



But the Spectator imagined I spoke disparagingly of the judge's wig. Does the Spectator really think the wisdom's in the wig? But he entirely mistook me. One of our judges, not long since, said publicly, that he hoped to see the day when those useless encumbrances would be thrown aside. So do not I. For though there be no wisdom in the wig, there is much *faith* in it. And the *faith* which the public has *in it*, is, in my opinion, quite as important to the public welfare, as the wisdom that is *under it*.

B.

That word *faith* reminds me of a question I have been on the point of asking you two or three times. Is there not something in these doctrines about things and sensations which is at variance with revealed religion?

A.

Not in the slightest degree. Religion is purely and emphatically a matter of *faith*, not of *reason*—a thing of the heart, not of the head. It rests on evidence *beyond the reach* of reason—FAITH, REVELATION, MIRACLES—and it requires us to *believe*, not to *argue*. The religion of reason is, in fact, no religion at all. But false friends, and foolish friends, (the worst of all enemies) are diligently sapping the foundations of her temple; while the latter, in the folly and blindness of their hearts, fondly imagine they are building buttresses to strengthen her walls. It is in vain that these latter fill the hands of the people (I speak of the working masses) with *exhortations to believe*, while *exhortations to argue, and reason, and cavil, and DOUBT*, in the shape of small smatterings of science and philosophy, are daily and hourly thrust down their throats by the former. To believe, is to be happy—to inquire, is to doubt—and to doubt, is to be miserable. And this is as true in politics as in religion.

## CHAPTER VI.

## INTELLECT.

## B

I presume, now that you have shown the manner in which Horne Tooke cracked those little nuts called conjunctions, prepositions, adverbs, &c. and showed that each had a proper kernel of its own, you have now nothing more to do than to submit more important words to the same process. So, as the sailors say, "crack on."

Much has been said of late years about the "*march of intellect*." I confess I could never very clearly understand the phrase. Suppose you begin, therefore, with that word *intellect*.

## A.

With all my heart. Yes—it is now my business to show that those important words, which seem at present to serve no other earthly purpose than that of setting mankind together by the ears, for want of understanding their true meaning; just as the prepositions and conjunctions did the scholiasts of all cultivated nations up to the time of Horne Tooke—it is, I say, my business now to show that those words have, like the conjunctions, each its own intrinsic meaning—and that unless each be used according to its own inherent sense, it necessarily becomes an *unintelligible* word—having then only an arbitrary meaning, which, I have already shown, is precisely the same as having none at all—and becomes, not only a prolific source of the bitterest disputes and heart-burnings, but an instrument, a tool, a magician's wand, in the hands of the designing, where-withal to cajole mankind.

It is my business now further to show that it is the *fact* of our having lost sight of the true meaning of certain important

words—the *fact* of our totally misunderstanding the true use and application of certain nouns—the *fact* of our entire ignorance of the real office which certain words perform in language—which has led us to personify and poetically embody things that have no existence—which has induced us to give “a local habitation and a name” to things which have neither name nor habitation of any sort.

Not accustomed to look beneath the surface of language—taught to call certain words *nouns*—that is, *names*—and naturally concluding that there can be no *names* for *things which have no existence*—and, looking through the universe and not being able to find a *thing* for every *name*—the result has been this—rather than submit to the *apparent* absurdity of having *names* without corresponding *things*, we have committed the *real* absurdity of *imagining* things to correspond with names.

I would further show that the mischief has not stopped here—but that it has proceeded to exercise a mighty and constantly accumulating influence—not indeed apparent nor direct—but a concealed and indirect, but resistless influence over our moral and political condition—and that that influence is not one which conduces to the happiness and welfare of man, but precisely the contrary. I say this influence is not a direct, but an indirect and secret one. And for this reason it cannot be opposed by direct and straightforward argument. If you set a weasel to chase a rabbit, you do so in vain, unless you first take the precaution to stop up all the outlets from the rabbit’s burrow. If you hunt a thief to his den, your labor will be in vain, unless you have first taken the precaution to close all the back doors, and have placed a sentinel on the watch at each of them.

If, therefore, I have not gone straight to my work—if I have seemed to proceed in a round-about way—if you have [not always been able to discover the target at which I aimed when I loosed the arrow—in a word, if you have not always been able to discover my drift, I beseech you to believe and take for granted that there was some back door or concealed wicket which I found it necessary to close; and that if you could not see it, it was probably owing to your not having examined the



premises with so careful an eye as I have long been accustomed to do.

One word more. This question is one of human happiness—purely and exclusively a question of human happiness. Let us discuss it with the temper of two men who have engaged to bore a certain plot of ground in hopes of discovering a gold mine; and who have engaged to share the bullion (if any) between them. In that case, the one would not throw unnecessary obstructions in the other's way. On the contrary, each would be anxious to aid, as much as possible, in *removing* obstructions, of whatever kind. Having a mutual and common interest, each would do all he could to aid the efforts of the other. If the one brought to the work *the best tools he could procure*, the other would not abuse him because he could procure no better; but would point out to him wherein his tools were deficient, and would assist him in remedying that deficiency. All men are loud in their praises of truth. All men pretend to love it above all earthly things—and to seek it with a panting eagerness. Mere false pretence, and shallow self-imposition! If a man go to another and tell him that he has strong reason to believe that there exists a valuable bed of coal\* on his estate, hitherto not thought of, and request leave to ascertain the fact by boring—with what a smiling welcome would such information be received! How readily would the permission sought be granted! How speedily would laborers be summoned to assist in the operation! How eagerly would he himself hurry with his informant to the land of promise! With what alacrity would he strip off his coat, seize upon the tools, and buckle to the task—he, even he himself! If he reasoned at all against the probability of success, how feebly would his arguments be urged, and how patiently and willingly would he listen to every new reason alleged in favor of it! Now what is the reason of this? The answer is plain enough. Because he is *really and truly* anxious to discover the treasure. And because he says to himself: “if I do not succeed, what then? I am but where I was—and there is no harm done.”

But go to the same man with the information that you have

\* Carbon will observe that I have adopted his hint.

reason to believe you have discovered a new truth in moral and political philosophy. Need I draw the opposite picture? Need I dwell in detail on the very different reception with which such information would be received? Oh! no—every body knows with what languid indifference it would be met, if the hearer's character happened to be of the apathetic kind—and with what taunting scorn, and vexatious opposition, and reiterated and Protean obstruction, every attempt to bore for it would be impeded, if the man's constitution happened to be leavened with a quick and vivacious temper. And why is this? Nothing can be easier than the answer; because the man, in this case, *is not anxious* to discover the treasure? No, that is not it either—but it is, because he loves his own old prejudices, right or wrong, so *infinitely* BETTER than the truth, that he will fight for them through thick and thin; and if, at last, compelled to admit the truth, he does so with pain and regret, and not until its brightness has almost dazzled him blind.

You may, if you please, call the rest of our conversation, an argument for THINGS AS THEY ARE in opposition to that eternal and senseless halloo! after THINGS UNATTAINABLE—that ceaseless clamour for improvement—that phantom-hunt after an impossible perfection—that everlasting cry for *intellectualizing* the people—with which the people have been gulled—with which the people have been swindled out of the happiness of contentment. But let us see what the word *intellect* really means. Like the word *fact*, it is purely a Latin word, with the Latin article *um* cut off *behind*, and the English article *the* or *an* put on *before*, in order to give it an English appearance—just as you would shave off the moustache of a Frenchman and give him an English accent—or, just as you would cut off the beard of a Jew and give him an honest expression of countenance—in order to make them *seem* English. But, of course, this can have no more effect upon the sense, than the shaving the lip and chin of the Frenchman and Jew can have any effect in altering the inherent qualities of the men. The Latin word is *intellect-um*—cut off the *um* and we have, at once, our so-called English word *intellect*—which, if it have any meaning at all, must and can only mean like the Latin whole word *intellect-um*,

*anything, something, understood*—or, more shortly, thus: *that which is understood*. The mongrel-phrase in question, therefore—for it is a mongrel-phrase, being half Latin, half French (for *march* is a French word)—signifies when translated into English, *the march of that which is understood*.

B.

That may be, and I believe certainly is, its proper meaning; but, in the phrase above, it is used instead of the word *mind*—i. e. *the thinking principle*.

A.

I shall show you presently that as the word *intellect* is a *Latin* word whose meaning has been forgotten, so *mind* is an *Anglo-Saxon* word whose meaning has been forgotten—forgotten by some, purposely misunderstood by others, and *never known* to the great majority.

B.

But even accordingly with your own showing, this phrase has after all an intelligible meaning. The “*march of intellect*,” “*the march of that which is understood*”—may, I think, very properly be made to signify “*increase of knowledge*.”

A.

Certainly—and “*the march of intellect*” must mean the progress of knowledge—the word *progress* answering to the word *march*, and the word *intellect* answering to the word *knowledge*. And thus it becomes clear that *intellect*, if it mean anything at all, must signify *knowledge*, and nothing else—or that, if it be used to signify anything else, it can only be by a *mere arbitrary substitution of it for some other word*.

But is this the sense in which it is used by those who have the word perpetually in their mouths?—who hawk it about at the corners of our streets, and cry it from the house-tops, until three-fourths of mankind have gone mad about it? It is not. They use it to designate some extraordinary and incomprehensible separate *something*, peculiar, and *exclusively* peculiar, to man—as though a well-taught setter-dog was not as surely and undeniably an intellectual animal as his master! That is, an animal capable of *knowing*! They use it as a blow-pipe wherewith they have inflated human vanity until



it struts the earth—a monster neither brute nor human—but proclaiming itself “liker a god.” They use it as the name of a clear, broad, and unmistakeable line of demarkation—as the sign of an impassable gulph—separating the brute from man—as a something or other which the brute does not, nor can, nor could by any possible supposition, possess, in common with man, without wholly and entirely changing his brute-nature. And thus human vanity is flattered that human wisdom may be gulled.

The mischief arising from this false doctrine is incalculable. For man, priding himself on the possession of this phantom distinction, and clinging to it with a fonder attachment, because it is the only thing which the brute does *not* possess as he is taught to believe in *common with himself*—scornfully, and with indignation, refuses to derive even happiness itself from its legitimate sources, for no other earthly reason than because it is from the same sources that the happiness of the brute is also derived. He disdains (or cheats himself into the belief that he disdains) to love or be pleased with anything that gives equal pleasure to the brute—he will not share even happiness with the *beast of the field*—no—but, curling his lip and snuffing up the air, he will rather submit to a life of actual wretchedness. He will wear away the energies both of body and brain in a ceaseless and fruitless hunt after a happiness which is unattainable, because he will not share, in common with the brute, the happiness which God has so bountifully and benevolently placed within his reach.

He *cannot* be an angel, and he *will not* be a man.

In the pride of his heart, hear him ! With what a scornful and affected pity he speaks of the animals below him. The meanest of the human race would feel himself covered with obloquy and shame were he seriously likened to a brute, even by the most distant allusion. Were you to reason with the most accomplished scholar and philosopher on the best means of obtaining happiness—and were you to point to the rudest and wholly uneducated boor as he follows his plough, and whistles as he goes for want of thought ; or saunters with his sweetheart by the hedge-row side, in the summer twilight—and say to him,

“is not that boor a happier man than yourself?”—whether he agreed with you or not, he would certainly see nothing monstrous in the question, nor absurd; and would not deny it to be a legitimate species of argument, whether sound or unsound. But if you were reasoning with that very boor, upon the same subject, and were to point to the ox, luxuriating at his ease in the shadow of his tree, and say to him: “is not that ox happy in his ignorance—happier far than if he were taught to think, and to know that he is but fattening for the slaughter-house—to reason upon the evils inseparable from his condition, and which, let him reason as he will, he cannot avoid”—if, I say, you were to talk thus to that boor, he would not listen to it for a moment—he would not give it an instant’s consideration—he would start from you as though you had thrown an adder in his face, and would angrily demand of you how you dared to liken *him*—HIM—an intellectual being—to the beast of the field? And thus his pride will not suffer him to profit. And yet I say there is not so great a difference, in the amount of intellect, that is, knowledge, between that ox and that boor, as between that boor and that philosopher. It is thus that these would-be improvers and menders of the human race, these intellectual tinkers, taking advantage of the self-love of men, cheat them of substantial happiness—make them dissatisfied with their inevitable condition—and send them sweating and toiling on a wild-goose chase after a phantom. The great mass of the people may have plenty to eat, and plenty to drink—they may be well clothed, and comfortably lodged—and time sufficient for healthy recreation, and social enjoyment. But what then? These are but mere sensual enjoyments, which they only share with the beasts of the field! What! shall intellectual man be content to be happy after the manner of the grazing brute? Does he not move erect and perpendicular to the earth’s surface, whereas the miserable brute moves horizontally? And shall he stoop to be made happy, and to rest satisfied, with the simple gratification of the brutal passions? the *bestial* appetites? the vile, grovelling, filthy, despicable senses of the body? Forbid it the dignity and grandeur of the human *intellect*! No! scourge them, whip them, mortify them, and show the world that ye are *men and not*

*beasts!* But why all this insane abuse of the human feelings and human enjoyments, with which the God who fashioned us has thought proper to endow us, and to make an absolute condition of our existence? How can men reconcile it to their duty to God, to heap these insulting epithets upon the very means which he has employed, in his benevolent wisdom, obviously for the express purpose of making life a pleasure and not a pain? But the secret of all this is, that the pride and the folly of man seek to establish a distinction and a difference between himself and the brute which God has denied him.

B.

But do you then admit no distinction between man and the brute?

A.

No distinction! yes, indeed—and one which ought to satisfy the most inordinate cravings of vanity. For it is one which has given him dominion over almost every other living thing. It is moreover an appreciable difference—a something which we can know, and comprehend—and not an unsubstantial phantom like that which we call intellect. In short, it is *human speech*. Those who cannot conceive that man owes the whole of his superiority to the gift of speech, together with those slight modifications in the organization of the brain and extremities which are necessary in order to make the gift of speech available—those, I say, who cannot conceive this—who cannot conceive that so *mighty an end* can possibly have been accomplished by so simple a contrivance—who fancy it necessary, in order to account for the vast disparity in knowledge and power, between man and his slave, the brute—who find it necessary, I say, to invoke and conjure up certain undiscoverable ghosts of nothing, in order to aid in the solution of this problem—surely they forget that they are speaking of a divine and not a human contriver; and can never have accustomed themselves to contemplate the operations of nature, of which the grandest and universal characteristic is, the accomplishment of stupendous results, by apparently insignificant means. Is not the “great globe itself” hung upon that which is less than a thread?

Had it been left to human contrivance to produce an animal



as superior to all other animals as man is—then indeed it is easy to conceive that so vast an effect could not have resulted from other than momentous and easily recognisable causes—and the earth would probably have been peopled with a race of unwieldy giants. But with the Divine Workman behold the difference! A little alteration in the arrangement of the fibres of the tongue—a slight change in the moulding and modelling of the parts within the cavity of the mouth—and *human speech* is the result. Then a little modification in the organization of the brain, and the configuration of the extremities, in order to adapt the latter for the acquirement, and the former for the reception, of sensations to be still further multiplied by the intercommunication resulting from speech, and—out of the rude materials of the mere brute—behold the Lord of the Creation! God breathes into him the spirit of eternal life, and—behold immortal man!

Look at yon rude daub of a landscape painting. Take it to a bungler to be improved. He will go over it carefully and painfully, leaf by leaf, and bough by bough—and finally leave it, altered indeed, but scarcely more like a real landscape than before. Now, take the same painting to a true genius. By a few masterly touches—by throwing in a dab of paint here, and another there—a lump in this place, and a lump in that—done, too, in a manner which, to an ordinary observer, would seem careless, indifferent, and inconsequential—but hang it up again and note the effect of these few off-hand touches—these slight and apparently incompetent changes—the result is magical—and the painting has become the antithesis of what it was. Such is the difference in the manner of working between genius and no-genius—between a human and an omnipotent contriver.

In our last conversation I mentioned to you an instance of extraordinary musical talent in the person of young May, resident in the square in which I live. Dissect this boy's brain—dissect it inch by inch, and the structure of his internal ear, atom by atom—and you shall find no recognisable difference from the same structures in other heads. No—nature has only given these structures in him an additional touch or two, invisibly minute, yet capable of producing, for they have produced, an extraordinary amount of superiority, as far as it regards this

one musical power or faculty (call it what you please) over the ordinary run of human heads. But no one would dream it to be necessary, in order to account for this boy's great musical superiority, to imagine him attended by some subtle, immaterial Being, some separate something, peculiar to himself—denied to all others, excepting only those who have exhibited similar musical talents! Oh! no—some minute difference from the ordinary arrangement in the organization of parts is fully sufficient to account for the effect, great as it is. How exceedingly slight is the variation in the arrangement of organized parts, which is nevertheless sufficient to elevate what would otherwise have been little better than an idiot into that magnificent thing, a man of genius, is proved, I think conclusively, by observing how slight is the derangement—how minute the lesion of cerebral structure—which is sufficient to reduce the man of genius to a drivelling idiot. You make but an exceedingly slight change in the organization of a watch by removing the hands—yet this change, slight as it is, reduces a rare and most important machine to a useless bauble—and so, by an equally slight alteration made in a different direction, viz. that of adding the hands, the useless bauble becomes at once a most useful instrument of the highest importance.

Let me here repeat once more for all, that I entirely agree with those who draw a broad line of distinction between mind and the soul. I have no concern whatever with man, other than as a human animal—it is with his nature while he continues to be a dweller on the earth, and with his earthly happiness alone, that I am in any way concerned, in all that I shall say in relation to him. Nor shall I utter a syllable which can be legitimately construed into hostility toward religion. But I shall show that universal education has an inevitable tendency to *subvert* all religion. For it teaches man to *think*, and to argue, while the very nature of things and circumstances renders it impossible for the masses to think and to argue *correctly*. They think and reason—but it is only about *particular instances*—while society, as well as the universe, is governed by laws which are not particular, but *general*. It is the root of all our political evils—it is fast overwhelming the earth with a forced and undue popula-

tion—and can only end in a return, more or less complete, to barbarism. Those who are urging us on, with such furious eagerness, towards a fancied perfection, are, in fact, driving us towards an opposite condition.

Extremes meet.

The educational perfectionists point to sundry broken skulls returning from a fair, and they exclaim: “is it good that man—intellectual man—with a power to make himself “liker a god,” should be suffered thus to make himself liker a beast? Would it not be bettering his condition to abolish fairs, and teach him to sit at home and read the Penny Magazine?” Why do not these men carry out the argument to its legitimate extreme, and ask whether it would not be for the interest of religion to abolish the lightning because it every now and then dashes down a church? These absurd questions, put with an air of so much triumph, can only be replied to by retorting others. Why has not God made the ass as perfect as the horse, the horse as perfect as man, and man as perfect as himself? And why has he not placed his creatures in a world where neither accident nor evil could reach them? Why has he given us bones which can be broken, joints which can be dislocated, and a skin which can be tortured by a bramble? Nothing can be more perfectly childish—nothing more surely indicative of superficial thinking—than these appeals to particular instances. The attempt of a sailor, in a storm, to knock down the wind with a hand-spike, would not be one whit less Quixotic than the endeavour of the purists to purge society of its so-called evils.

The outcry about intellect and mind has caused mankind to mistake, first the nature of man, and next the nature of the sources from which his happiness is to be derived. It has taught him to scorn his true nature and to aspire to a false one—and, taking the false nature for granted without inquiry, it is a necessary consequence that he should seek happiness also from false sources. Thus he rejects the happiness, with scorn, which is within his reach, and hunts after it in quarters in which it is unattainable. And the painful longing which prompts his search, doomed to perpetual disappointment, is all that he gets in exchange for that contentment and real fruition, which he will not accept, because it must be enjoyed in common with the brute.



Educated men have, like opium-eaters, created for themselves a new want, the gratification of which affords them pleasure. And those who would thrust a large share of education upon the working masses, with the view of affording them this gratification, cannot do so without first creating the want; and they seem to forget that, while it is easy to create the want, it is, in an overwhelming majority of instances, and from the very nature of things, manifestly impossible to be gratified.

It is easy to make the people opium-eaters, but it is impossible to furnish a thousandth part of them with the means of procuring the opium. And it is equally impossible to prevent those who cannot procure opium, from supplying their wants, at a cheaper rate, with drugs of a more exciting, but still more poisonous character. The inability to gratify it, however, cannot destroy the want when once created, but, on the contrary, only makes it more eager and importunate; nor will it cause the cessation of the efforts to gratify it. These will still be unceasingly made; and as they cannot be made in the *right direction*—since working men cannot devote any efficient portion of time to study—they will be made in the *wrong direction*.

Taught to believe their condition not a natural and inevitable one—trained to feel dissatisfied with things as they are—provoked to reason about things as they fancy they should be—without the leisure, or the knowledge, or the habits, necessary to enable them to reason correctly—they wander in a maze of error with regard to those things concerning which, even if they did possess both the necessary leisure, knowledge, and habits, they could not, even then, think otherwise than unsoundly. For no man can argue justly where his own interests, feelings, prejudices, and passions, are immediately and deeply concerned. No man can reason competently and soundly concerning any so-called evil, unless he be himself placed beyond the reach of its influence.

Hence arises their perpetual desire for political changes, resulting from a perpetual hope of bettering their condition.

And because this restless desire of change cannot be complied with without subverting the whole fabric of society, there is engendered in the hearts of the people a steady hostility towards

those in power; and their feelings are eternally at war with those who are placed in authority over them.

The man who performs the duties of a footman to his master's daughter may be as happy as a king. But only let some one hint to him that his young and lovely mistress has shown symptoms of attachment towards him—let him only be made to believe that, under more favourable circumstances, he would have had as fair a chance as others of winning her affections—and he instantly fancies himself deeply in love—conceives the most implacable hatred towards those whose opportunities and advantages are better and more frequent than his own—curses with bitter imprecations his menial condition—and ends perhaps by cutting either his own throat, or the throat of some fancied and unconscious rival.

Hence those heart-burnings and repinings, those envious jealousies towards the upper classes, the watchfulness with which they regard their doings, and the eagerness with which they seize on any error in their conduct, and the triumph with which they hold it up to scorn and ridicule. They feel that they are unhappy, and they do not know why. They see the upper classes in the enjoyment of certain refined luxuries, and they conclude they are happier than themselves. But this is not true. Their pleasures are of a different kind, and derived from different sources. But this is all. And what they gain in number, they assuredly lose in intensity. While they have multiplied sources of misery wholly unknown to the well-fed working man; and while almost every additional enjoyment is counterbalanced by some corresponding annoyance.

But because the wealthy are also generally educated, it is to this latter circumstance that the working man attributes the wealthy man's *supposed* greater enjoyment. We do not envy them their wealth, say they—wealth cannot confer happiness—but we are men like themselves—we are not brute-beasts—God has conferred upon the poor man a *mind*—an *intellect*—as well as upon the rich—and we have an equal right to all the enjoyments which the possession of this mind puts within our power. God has given it to rich and poor in equal perfection, as a source of enjoyment *peculiar to man*, and it is the duty of

our governors to take care that we have the means of obtaining it; and that this most precious of all God's gifts be not given in vain. In their hearts they accuse those who think differently on this subject of a desire to defraud them of a gift, which, in their view, takes the shape of a natural right. They accuse them of a desire to keep this glorious endowment—this distinctive characteristic of man—this mind—all to themselves; and to revel in its enjoyment as in something too rich, and magnificent, and divine, to be permitted to the multitude. They accuse them of a wish to degrade the working classes to an equality with the brute, by withholding from them the means of cultivating that which God has given them for the express purpose of distinguishing them from the brute. Mistaken reasoners! As if the faculty of speech, and the superior knowledge directly consequent upon it, without cultivation, was not a sufficient distinction for all the purposes of happiness. But it is pride—a false pride which has been awakened in them by the outcry about intellect—it is an unnatural pride, and not a natural desire of happiness, which lies at the root of all their reasonings, and which will not let them see that happiness is not the *less desirable* because it is derived from sources common to other animals; nor one jot *the more so* when it happens to flow from fountains which to them are fountains sealed.

The people were happy enough until they were taught to chew opium; and, through this exciting medium, to acquire wild imaginings—airy visions—delusive dreams—beautiful in prospective—but not less unattainable than unsubstantial. The perpetual obtrusion of these dreamy hallucinations—these winning, and wooing, and beckoning phantasms—these cheating ghosts of impossible things—have produced the effect which might have been foreseen—that of disgusting the people with the sober realities of their natural and inevitable lot. The people, I say, were happy enough. But they were told that there was a fair vestal of unearthly loveliness, called intellect, whose young-eyed beauty, like Endymion's, could never fade—whose charms transported the beholder from earth to heaven, and whose embrace brought heaven to earth—that this angelic



being only waited to be wooed, and only needed to be wooed in order to be won. From that moment they became discontented, restless, and unhappy. From that moment they began to conceive feelings of envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness towards those on whom accident had conferred the right to enter, at will, the fane of this fair divinity—to dwell and ponder, with a dark and morose thoughtfulness, over their inevitable lot—and to curse, in bitterness of spirit, that cruel and supposed unjust condition which excluded themselves from worshipping in the same temple.

## CHAPTER VII.

### OF MIND.

I will now endeavour to explain to you what I believe to be the true nature of mind, and what the true meaning of the word. You know, of course, in what manner Sir Isaac Newton accounted for the planetary motions, and that it has scarcely ever been disputed since his time, so satisfactory were the proofs which he advanced in its favor?

B.

I think I do. I believe he assumed that “every particle of matter attracts every other particle in the universe with a force proportional to the product of their masses directly, and the square of their mutual distance inversely, and is itself attracted with an equal force.”

A.

Yes—and that this is a universal law, called by Newton the law of gravitation, no one I believe now ever dreams of doubting. I suppose, therefore, if I can adduce precisely the same proofs

in favor of my theory of mind, which Sir I. Newton advanced in evidence of the universality of his law of gravitation, you will admit that such evidence, as far as it goes, is not without considerable weight?

B.

As far as it goes—certainly.

A.

But if, in addition to this, I can show that the word mind, as at present used, is an unintelligible word—that it has no power of communicating either thoughts, ideas, sensations, or knowledge, or whatever else you may please to call that which it is the office of words to communicate—if I can do this, I suppose you will allow some weight also even to this species of proof?

B.

Some weight certainly, although this will be but proof negative.

A.

Proof negative with regard to the present use of the word mind, and therefore proof presumptive with regard to the mode in which I am about to submit that it ought to be used. But if, besides this, I can also prove that, by giving to this word *mind* the meaning which I propose to give it, this otherwise unintelligible word becomes instantly plain and intelligible—so plain that the most ignorant ploughman can use it, and converse about it, and reason upon it, as intelligibly and sensibly as he can about any one thing on his native farm—if all that has been hitherto mysterious and inexplicable with regard to mind, can, by giving the word the meaning I propose, be made at once simple and easily comprehensible—if, I say, I can do this—

B.

If you can really do this, then I think it cannot be denied that you will have accumulated a weight of evidence which it will be exceedingly difficult to resist.

A.

But if, moreover, I can also show that the etymological meaning of the word—the meaning stamped upon it by its very nature and formation—the meaning for the conveyance of which the word was expressly invented, and formerly used—is the very meaning

which I now propose (*not to give it*) but only *to restore to it*—if, I say, I can do this, then I think I may fairly claim the credit of having set at rest for ever those multiplied metaphysical bickerings and disputatious animosities, concerning this word mind, which have vexed the world so long.

B.

If you can perform as liberally as you promise, I honestly think you will deserve it. Whether you will obtain it, is another matter.

A.

I shall first prove that the word mind, as at présent used, is an unintelligible word.

It is admitted on all hands that the purpose of words is to communicate our thoughts—that is, to make one and the same thought at the same time *common* to both the speaker and hearer—to excite in the mind of the hearer the same thought, idea, or sensation, which is in the mind of the speaker. And if a word cannot do this, it is an unintelligible word.

B.

That is unquestionably the purpose of words. And any word which is destitute of the power of fulfilling this office is manifestly an unintelligible word.

A.

You will also admit that the mere enunciation of a word cannot put any sensation or idea into the mind of another, if it so happen that the particular idea or sensation, intended by that word, be not already there. In short, if a man do not know the meaning of a word, the sound of the word itself cannot tell him.

B.

Clearly not.

A.

If, then, I declare to you that there is not in me any idea, or sensation, or notion, answering to any particular word which I hear you use, what course will you pursue in order to put the idea in question into me?

B.

If it be not there already, there is certainly no possible way of putting it there, excepting that of submitting the object (or some



similar object) of which the word is the sign, to one or other of your senses.

A.

Just so. Now I declare—not jestingly nor captiously, but with perfect sincerity—that there is in me no idea or sensation which is represented by the word mind. I say it is not there, and I desire you to *put it there*. For while the word remains to me unconnected with any idea—so long as there is in me no idea or sensation represented by the word—the word must be to me no more than the sound of a child’s rattle—wholly unintelligible. Once more, then, I desire you to put into me a certain idea which *is not in me*, but which *is in you*, and which you call by the name of mind, in order that, when you use the word mind, that word may be to me intelligible—in order that when you *talk about mind*, I may know *what that is* you are talking about. For unless I know what you are talking about—certainly you must be talking, as far as I am concerned, unintelligibly.

B.

If the idea be not already in you, there is certainly no conceivable means of putting it into you, since it is not the sign of any object cognizable by the senses.

A.

To me therefore the word must necessarily be unintelligible. But let us suppose, for a moment, that there is in me an idea to which I have given the name of mind. How am I to know that the idea or sensation which I call mind, is the same as that which *you* call mind? If the idea in question were the sign of some sensible object, I might point to that object and say: “that is the prototype of my idea;” and, if it were also the prototype of your idea, you would say: “it is also the prototype of my idea;” and we should then know, from this reference to a common standard, that our ideas were alike. But where shall we find a common standard to which we can refer, in order to ascertain whether our two ideas of mind are the same or different? There is manifestly none. We may each, therefore, have an idea known to ourselves by the name of mind, and yet those two ideas may be as different as light from darkness.

How then can we two use the word mind intelligibly? Suppose a musical composer to have composed a new song—and suppose another musical composer also to have composed a new song. Suppose these two gentlemen, being friends, mention the fact to each other, but without singing or playing either of the songs each to the other. But suppose one tells the other that he has given to his song a particular name; and suppose the other, from caprice or otherwise, choose to call his own song by the same name. These two gentlemen will now have in them, each a particular group of musical ideas or sensations, each totally different from the other, as it may be; or, for anything they know to the contrary, they may be both exactly alike. But they are both called by the same name. Now, I say, is it possible for these two composers to converse intelligibly together about the character and quality and merits of their two songs, by means of the name by which they have mutually agreed to designate these songs? They both know the name of the two songs. There is but one name for both. Now I ask you whether this name, when used by one, can by possibility be understood by the other? Whether it can by possibility convey from one to the other any knowledge whatever. Suppose the name to be *Aria*. Suppose the one says to the other: “how do you like my new *Aria*?” I ask you again: “is this an intelligible question?” If you answer hastily, you may perhaps observe that the word *Aria*, like the word tree, would still have power to excite in the mind of the hearer certain general ideas—that it would cause to pass through his mind a vast number of musical remembrances. Perhaps it would. But in order that a word may be intelligible, it is not sufficient that it brings into the mind sensations. It must have power to bring into the mind *one particular sensation* (or group) in preference to all others—and that one must be the *same* as that existing in the mind of the speaker at the time of his speaking. The office of words is not to *convey* ideas or thoughts—they have no such power—nor simply to excite ideas or thoughts—but to *communicate* them—that is, to render *common* to two persons or more, *one and the same thought*, at one and the same instant of time. Pray remember the meaning of this word *communicate*—

it signifies—not to convey—but to *make common* to two or more persons *one and the same thought, at one and the same time*. A word which cannot do this, is clearly an unintelligible word—a word which is (if I may coin an expression) *not understandable*. It is thus with mind. There is in you an idea, you say, which you call mind; and we are supposing, for the sake of argument, that there is also in me an idea also called mind. But as there is no common prototype to which we can both refer, and by the help of which we can each let the other know what his idea is like—each must for ever remain ignorant of the other's idea. And thus we two, even supposing I have in me (which I certainly have not) an idea represented by the word mind, can no more converse intelligibly about mind, than the two musical composers could about the songs which each had privately composed, each being ignorant of the other's song—that is, having never heard it. Thus if twenty men converse about mind, and each of the twenty ask, in turn, of his neighbour, what he means by the word mind, there is not one of the whole twenty that can answer the question. They may ring the changes, it is true, upon the various *different names* which mind has received—they may call it sometimes the *thinking principle*, sometimes the *rational faculty*, sometimes the *understanding*, sometimes one thing, sometimes another. But surely, surely, nothing in the world can be clearer, than that multiplying the names of a thing can throw no possible light upon the nature of the thing itself! You might as well attempt “to *discourse into a blind man*,” as Locke says, “ideas of colours.” Suppose I say to you: “Mr. B——, I have just returned from a most interesting visit. I have been to visit the celebrated blynam.

B.

Blynam! what's that?

A.

Ah—that's the question. I cannot make you understand the nature of the blynam, because it is not cognizable by any of the senses of man—neither can I describe it, for it has no similitude under the sun. It is, however, that which some call the alteron, and some the mallityptis, and besides these it has a great variety of other names. But, in fact, it is that power, or



principle, or immaterial agent, by which the operation of blynamming is performed.

May I ask you whether I have succeeded in giving you any idea of the blynam?

B.

Certainly not.

A.

And unless I can submit the blynam to one or more of your senses, or find out something which resembles it, and which I *can* submit to your senses, must not this word blynam remain for ever to you a perfectly unintelligible word, even supposing that there really were in me a bonâ fide well-defined idea represented by that word? And must not this be the case, let me multiply its name as often as I will?

Since then the word mind has no power to excite in the hearer the *same idea* which it represents in the speaker—since, if it do excite any idea at all, no man can say that it is the *right idea*—that is, the same idea intended by the speaker—it is manifestly certain that it is incapable of fulfilling the office of a word—that it has no power to *communicate* ideas or thoughts—and is, therefore, an unintelligible sound.

Let us hear what my Lord Brougham has to say on this subject. In page 238 of his notes to his “Discourse of Natural Theology,” he says: “from certain ideas in our *minds*, produced no doubt by, and connected with, our bodily senses, but independent of and separate from them, we draw certain conclusions by reasoning, and those conclusions are in favor of the existence of something *other than* our sensations and our reasonings, and *other than* that which experiences the sensations and *makes the reasonings*—passive in the one case—active in the other. That *something* is what we call mind.” Here you see my Lord Brougham expressly declares that the mind is *not that which reasons*, but *other than* that which “makes the reasonings.” For I suppose no one will deny that “to reason” and to “make reasonings” are one and the same thing. But in the very third page following he expressly declares that *it is* the mind *which reasons*. Into such gross and barefaced absurdities are men betrayed—no matter how clever, how learned—when they use

words which are not the representatives of ideas, and whose proper use and office they do not understand.

Now hear what he says almost in the same breath with the sentence above quoted. In page 241 he says: "nor can we, even in any one instance, draw the inference of the existence of matter, without at the same time exhibiting a proof of the existence of *mind*; for we are, by the supposition, *reasoning*, inferring, drawing a conclusion, forming a belief; therefore there exists somebody, or something, to *reason*, to infer, to conclude, to believe; that is, *we*—not any fraction of matter, but a *reasoning*, inferring, believing being—in other words, a *mind*." Mirabaud, or whoever the author was who wrote the *Système de la Nature*, could not have contradicted my Lord Brougham more roundly and flatly than my Lord Brougham has contradicted himself.

But I think I can show you demonstrably that the word *mind* is not an intelligible word. I will endeavour to do this by the help of one of these passages of Lord Brougham's, by striking out the word *mind* and substituting in its place a mere algebraical sign. And then I will appeal to you—I will appeal to any unprejudiced man in the kingdom—and I will ask him to say honestly whether the passage does not really and in truth convey precisely the same meaning—the same quantity of information—*without* the word *mind*, and *with* the algebraical sign, as it does just as it stands in my Lord Brougham's book. In both the above passages, Lord Brougham has said that the word *mind* stands for *something*—something which we *call* *mind*. Now, I ask you whether this word *something* be an intelligible term. Observe, I do not ask you whether it performs any useful office or not—for it does—a very useful one indeed—but I ask you whether it has any power to communicate any idea or sensation? Whether it conveys any knowledge? If I say to you: "I am going to York to buy"—and there stop—do I not convey to you every jot as much information as though I were to say: "I am going to York to buy *something*?" Is it not clear that this word *something* is merely the sign of an *unknown* object, which *unknown* object might be just as well represented, as an algebraist would certainly represent it, by the letter *x*, or

y, or z? "I am going to York to buy what I shall represent for the present by the letter x. When I have bought this x and brought it to town, then I shall send for my friends and show them my purchase." Now I say it is a matter of not the slightest moment, whether in this instance I use the letter *x* or the word *something*, seeing that neither one nor the other conveys any, the slightest portion of knowledge or information—neither being the sign of any particular idea or sensation—but both being merely signs of some *unknown* object. But if I strike out of the sentence, "I am going to York to buy something," any word which is the sign of a particular idea or sensation, and which does convey some knowledge or information—if, for instance, I strike out the word "York," and substitute the letter *x*—then you will find instantly that the sentence so altered does not convey so much information as before. The word York is intelligible—conveys information. The letter *x* is an unintelligible (though useful and necessary) sign, conveying no information of any kind. The letter *x*, therefore, and the word York, cannot be substituted for each other without altering the sense. In the passage quoted from Lord Brougham, he himself tells us, the word mind stands for *something*—for *something* which performs such and such actions. Now, I say, that since (as has been seen) the letter *x* can perform the office of the word *something*, and since the word *something* can perform the office of the word mind, the letter *x* can also be substituted for the word mind without detriment to the sense, or knowledge, or information conveyed by the passage: as thus. "Nor can we even draw the inference in any one instance of the existence of matter, without at the same time exhibiting a proof of the existence of (something else—which something else we will represent by) the letter *x*; for we are, by the supposition, reasoning, inferring, drawing a conclusion, forming a belief; therefore there exists somebody or something, to reason, to infer, to conclude, to believe; that is, *we*—not any fraction of matter, but a reasoning, inferring, believing being—in other words, (that something else which we have before represented by) the letter *x*." Both the letter *x* and the word mind are signs of an *unknown* something which is said by Lord Brougham, in



p. 241, *to reason*, and in p. 238, *not to reason*—and I ask you how the sign of an *unknown* something can by any conceivable possibility be an intelligible, that is, an *understandable*, that is, a *knowable* sign? The thing is too gross for an instant's doubt—it *cannot* be denied with any, the slightest conceivable show of reason—that the word mind is nothing more than the sign of an *unknown something*—that is, in other words which are precisely equivalent, the sign of *nobody knows what*. And I repeat, that a word which is the sign of *nobody knows what*, is, and must be, to all intents and purposes, broadly and manifestly, an *unintelligible word*.

## B.

But you will please to remember that Lord Brougham and those who advocate the separate existence of mind as a distinct being, a performing agent, whole in itself and entire, represent the word *mind*, not merely as the sign of *something*, but of that particular individual *something* which performs the operation of *thinking*.

## A.

I know they do—and there would be some weight in your objection (although even then extremely little) if these gentlemen would also tell us what *thinking is*—I say, there would be some little force in your objection if the word *think* were not to the full, as at present used, as completely unintelligible as the word *mind*. But while this *pretended operation of thinking* remains as profound a mystery, as does that pretended existence called mind, surely it is sufficiently clear that the one cannot be explained by reference to the other. To do this, is to do what I have done before, for the purpose of showing you the folly of doing it—viz. to attempt to explain to you the nature of the *blynam* by telling you that it is that particular individual *something* which performs the operation of *blynamming*. But I shall now soon arrive at this word *think*, when I shall explain to you what the word really means, and also wherein this *supposed* operation of thinking consists. The explanation of this word *think*, and of the supposed operation of thinking, as well as the restoration of the true meanings to the words, *to be*, *reason*, &c., will all of them form so many additional and very strong col-

lateral arguments in favor of my theory of *mind*. This by the way.

But let us suppose that the operation (as it is called) of thinking were really a perfectly intelligible operation—as comprehensible and recognisable as that operation which is performed when a stone falls to the ground. I say I will give you the benefit of this supposition wholly gratuitous as it is—and still I will show you that, like most other gratuities, it is of little value to you—nay, of none at all.

*Mind*, then, is that particular *something* which performs the well-understood operation of thinking—just as *gravitation* is that particular *something* which performs the operation of drawing a stone towards the centre of the earth. But I affirm that this word *gravitation*, when standing by itself—and you will please to remember that we are all along talking of the *mind* as it *stands by itself*, the sign of *some one unique and independent being*—I say, this word *gravitation*, when standing by itself, and used without reference to its etymological meaning, as the word *mind* is, is also a perfectly unintelligible word—a word wholly incapable of conveying any information, or of communicating any idea or sensation—in short, that this word also, when used by itself, like the word *mind*, is but an algebraical sign, used by philosophers in their various processes of reasoning, for the sake of convenience, and that its place might just as well be supplied by the algebraical signs of unknown things, *x*, *y*, *z*,—that is, by any one of them. The philosopher, while reasoning concerning the planetary motions, the velocities of falling bodies, &c., would have frequent occasion to mention the fact that “every particle of matter in the universe attracts every other particle with a force proportional, &c. &c.” But this would be extremely troublesome, and even difficult to introduce intelligibly. He adopts a sign, therefore, and makes that sign stand, in his own mind, for the whole sentence of: “the power by which every particle of matter in the universe attracts, &c.”—that sign is the word *gravitation*. Standing, therefore, *for all the words in that sentence*, it has an intelligible meaning; for it means all that is meant by that whole sentence—and so would the letter *x* or *y*, or any other arbitrary mark or letter used as a kind of

short-hand sign for convenience and dispatch in reasoning, precisely as the algebraist uses his signs for unknown quantities. But standing by itself, as the representative of that particular power which attracts one body toward another, it is utterly unintelligible, that is, wholly incapable of *communicating* ideas, thoughts, sensations, or knowledge; just as much so as is the algebraical sign  $x$ , or  $y$ , or  $z$ , when used in algebraical reasonings—a sign of an unknown something—that is, *nobody knows what*.

The mind, says Lord Brougham, is the name which we give to that *something* which performs the operation of reasoning and concluding. And I say that gravitation is the name which we give to that something which performs the operation of pulling stones and other bodies towards the centre of the earth. But what then? Are we thence to conclude that that *something* which performs this operation, and which we call gravitation, is a veritable, separate, independent being, distinct *from the earth*, and only dwelling *in the earth*? A living and active agent constantly engaged in the act of pulling? If so, there must exist such a being, not only in the centre of the earth, but in the centre of every individual atom composing the earth! For every atom is attracted, that is, pulled, by every other atom, not only of the earth, but of the universe! Surely no one will make such an assertion as this! and yet there is precisely the same reason for asserting this, as there is for asserting *mind* to be a separate, independent, active being. It is asserted that thinking is an operation, and that, therefore, there must be, as Lord Brougham says, “*somebody or something*,” to perform this operation. Granted. But then, so also is the attracting, that is, pulling of a stone towards the centre of the earth, an operation; and, therefore, by the same kind of reasoning, there must be a “*somebody or something*” to perform this operation. And if it be necessary to suppose that this “*somebody or something*” be a living, independent, self-existent, active being, in the one case, there is clearly an equal necessity for believing it to be so in the other. That mass of matter called a *man*, cannot, according to Lord Brougham, perform the operation of thinking—there must be “*somebody or something*” else to perform that



operation—which, he says, is called *mind*, or the thinking faculty or power. Very well. And by a parity of reasoning, so neither can that mass of matter called the earth perform the operation of pulling or attracting—there must, therefore, be “*somebody or something*” else to perform that operation—which philosophers call gravitation, or the gravitating faculty, power, force, or law. But what conceivable reason is there, in the one case, to suppose this power to be an independent, separate, living, and acting being, more than in the other? For the operation of pulling a heavy body downwards towards the centre of the earth, is surely as clearly and manifestly a *bonâ fide* operation, requiring an active agent, as is the pretended operation of thinking! But enough of this. There is evidently no more reason for supposing it in the one case than in the other.

But you say the word *mind* is so far a particular term that it represents one particular power or faculty and no other. Very well—of all the powers that be it represents only one. But, with regard to this one, does it give any information? any knowledge? Does it inform us what it is? or what it is like? Does it make this one power intelligible to us? comprehensible by us? The *effects* of this one power we already know—but does it enable us to understand the nature of the power itself? Not in the slightest degree. It tells us what power it is *not*—that it is *not* the power which causes matter to gravitate towards matter—*not* the power which causes iron to attract the lightning—it tells us, I say, what power it is *not*—but does it tell us anything of its own nature? No. It gives us, when standing alone, no information whatever, and is wholly an unintelligible word—like the word gravitation.

But pray do not misunderstand me. The word gravitation is only an unintelligible word, when used merely as an abbreviated sign, by philosophers, to represent an unknown power, as algebraists use the letters *x*, *y*, *z*, as the signs of unknown quantities. It is only, then, an unintelligible word when used, like the word *mind*, without any reference to its etymological meaning. But it has, like every other word, a very good and sufficient etymological meaning of its own, and so has the word *mind*. The only difference between the uses of the two words

is this. The etymological meaning of the word gravitation (the word being of very recent introduction) has not been lost sight of. And therefore the word is only used as a mere unintelligible (though extremely useful) ratiocinative sign *sometimes*. Whereas the etymological meaning of the word mind *has been lost sight of*, and is, therefore, used as an unintelligible sign *always*.

We have only to restore its etymological meaning, and there will be no more difficulty about mind than there is about gravitation. Nay, not so much. For I herewith promise you, without quibble or prevarication, or play upon terms, to enable you to draw *mind* upon paper, or rather its exact representation—at least, as exact as any artist can draw a tree, or a man, or windmill.

I have said that the word *mind* is not the less unintelligible because it is said to be the name of only one individual particular power or faculty, and no other. I must illustrate this.

The word *thing*, you must admit, is the name of every single atom of matter composing the universe—and also of every conceivable combination of those atoms. And if any one atom could be divided into as many millions of parts as there are millions of single atoms contained in the universe, this word *thing* would still be the name of every one of those parts. If, then, I say I have in my mind a thought, or idea, or sensation, which is, at present, proper, private, and peculiar to me, but which I desire to make *common to us both*—that is, to communicate—and if, with the view of doing so, I call it a *thing*—then every atom in the universe, separate or combined, must pass through your mind, supposing I meant some visible object, before you can be sure that the *thing* present at that moment to my mind, has been present to yours—and when all this has been done, you are not one jot wiser than you were before, for want of knowing *which* of them all I intended the word *thing* to represent. The word *thing*, therefore, so used, is unintelligible, is it not?

B.

Perfectly so.

A.

But I now inform you that the *thing* I intended is an *animal*.

I have now told you what that thing is not—that it is no portion, nor any combination of unorganized matter. But although you now know what it is *not*, you know no more what it is than you did before. When every conceivable form of organized matter has passed through your mind, you are still ignorant of my meaning for want of knowing *which* of them all I intended—and this word *animal*, when so used, is as unintelligible as the word *thing*—as I think you will find by and bye, when I call it by an *intelligible* name, which I shall do presently—and then you will observe the very different effect produced on your mind by a really intelligible word, from that which is produced by these *general terms*, when only used as signs for convenience of speech—pegs, as it were, whereon to hang conversation. Not but what they are all the signs of sensations, but then they are incapable of *communicating* sensations. But the word *mind*, since its etymological meaning has been forgotten, is the sign of no sensation or idea whatever.

But to proceed—I now say that the animal I have in my mind is—a quadruped. Here again I have added to the amount of those things which it is *not*, but you are still as ignorant as before as to the proper idea—you know it has four legs indeed—but whether they be the legs of an elephant or a water-rat you cannot tell—and therefore you cannot converse with me *intelligibly* about my idea—therefore the word still remains an unintelligible word to you.

But I now add that it is a *dog* which I have in my mind. But dogs are of almost infinite variety, whereas the idea which I have had in my mind all this time is one and the same—a dog of a definite size and colour, and no other. The word is still to you unintelligible. For the word *dog*, as here used, and as they use the word *mind*, does not signify *any and every* dog, but only that *particular* dog, whose idea is at this moment in my memory.

I now inform you that it is one of Mr. W.'s hounds, every one of which, I know, you are intimately acquainted with individually and by name. But there are fifty hounds in Mr. W.'s pack; and although the whole of these are now fluttering through your mind, you cannot point to any one of them and say: "that is



the dog you mean." Even yet, therefore, the word *dog* is an unintelligible word, and will not enable you to converse with me *intelligibly* about that particular dog whose idea is in my mind.

But I will now use an *intelligible* word. The dog I mean is Mr. W.'s old hound—Ringwood !

B.

My old friend Ringwood—poor fellow ! he has lately lost an eye.

A.

That observation proves how instantly and thoroughly and easily you understood me, the moment I used an intelligible word—the moment I substituted the sign of a *known* something for the sign of an *unknown* something—which must always be done before they can become *intelligible words*. But you could never have known I was thinking of a one-eyed dog had I not at last substituted a particular term for the general terms—a sign of a *known quantity* instead of the signs of an *unknown quantity*—in a word, an *intelligible* term in place of an *unintelligible* one.

But of all the powers that be, the word *mind*, you say, only represents that *particular one* which performs the operation of thinking. True—but so the word *quadruped*, as used above, only represented, out of all the various forms of living matter, that one particular kind which is necessary to perform the operation of running on all-fours. And yet you found the term an unintelligible one.

But the word *mind*, as used by Locke, Lord Brougham, and almost everybody else, is in a much worse predicament than these general terms. For these are all the signs of sensations, although not of *particular* sensations. And it frequently happens, in talking or writing, that these general terms are all that are required, because the sense of what is said or written, does *not* depend upon the fact of *one and the same* idea being present in the mind of him who writes and him who reads ; but is sufficiently intelligible, provided only there be present to the minds of both an idea belonging to *one and the same* class. This is the case when we are talking of some property, or other

accident, which is common *to all the individuals* of one class. In this case it does not signify which individual of the class is selected, by each person, as the object of contemplation while conveying, since *all* the individuals of that class *are alike*, with regard to that particular property which is the subject of conversation.

Thus, in speaking of the habits and manners of the honey-bee, it is by no means necessary that both speaker and listener should have in his mind an idea of *one and the same honey-bee*. It is sufficient that each has in his memory *a honey-bee*. Why? Because *all honey-bees are alike*, as far as it regards habits and manners—that is, the subject of conversation.

Thus these general terms—and *all general terms* which have not lost their etymological meaning—that is, their power of exciting sensations or ideas—may frequently supply the place of particular names—as when we talk of dogs, horses, trees, things, man, &c. &c. And it is absolutely necessary that it should be so. For it would be manifestly impossible to give a *particular name* to *every particular thing* in the universe.

But the word *mind* has lost this power of exciting sensations. And why? Because it has lost its etymological meaning—that meaning which was *stamped upon it* at its formation, as upon every other word—because the connexion between the word and its meaning has been lost sight of—because the *reason* why that particular word, and no other, was selected to serve one particular purpose has been overlooked and forgotten—and because, *therefore*, it has acquired an *arbitrary meaning*, which no word can have, and yet remain an intelligible sound.

Sir I. Newton did not select the word gravitation to be the sign of his celebrated law *arbitrarily*. There was a *reason* for it—which reason is discoverable in the etymology of the word. And there was a *reason* why the word *mind* was selected, in preference to others, to serve the purpose which it was intended to serve. That reason is also discoverable in its etymology. We have only, then, to refer to the *admiral's book* and ascertain what meaning stands opposite to the word *mind* *there*, and that will lead us directly to the meaning which it bears in the *book of nature*—that is, in the *nature of things*. For, let it never be

forgotten, that the admiral's book is only a faithful transcript of the book of nature. Let it never be forgotten that language was made for *things*, and not *things* for language—that *there is* such a thing as language, *because there were first* such things as *things*. Let it never for a moment be forgotten that *things* are the *substance* of which *language* is the *shadow*—and that a word with an *impossible* meaning is an *impossible* word—that is to say, an unintelligible sound.

B.

“Such *things* as *things*!” you will be censured for this phrase, I think.

A.

Probably—but it will only be by such mere verbal critics as the Spectator—men who, like children, being pleased and satisfied with the pretty glitter of the tinsel gilding, care little for the quality of the gingerbread.

Having demonstrated that the word *mind*, like the word gravitation, when used without reference to its etymological sense, is merely a sign used for the purposes of talking, as the algebraists use their letters *x*, *y*, *z*—because we cannot talk about *effects* (which we do know) without also talking about causes, (of which we know nothing) without representing these causes by some word, sign, or letter—in a word, having shown that the word *mind*, as at present used, is merely the sign of an *unknown something* (which is indeed admitted on all hands)—and having shown that the sign of an unknown something—that is, the sign of *nobody knows what*—must necessarily be an unintelligible word—I now proceed to make it at once intelligible by proving that it is the sign—not of an *unknown something*, but of a *known something*—not of a *nobody knows what*, but of an *everybody knows what*—simply by restoring to it its etymological meaning—by restoring to it that meaning which was stamped upon it at its formation, and to communicate which meaning was the very end and object—the very purpose—for which the word was invented.

I suppose it will not be contended even by my Lord Brougham—it will not be contended in this, the year of our Lord 1841, by *anybody*, I should think—that *memory* also is a “somebody



or something—not any fraction of matter—but a Being independent of and separate from our bodily senses, *other than* our sensations and that which experiences our sensations”—and that that “somebody or something is what we call” memory! I take it for granted that no one in this the nineteenth century of the christian era, and six-thousandth year of the world’s creation, will say that “there is an operation called remembering, and therefore there must be “somebody or something” to perform that operation!—not any fraction of matter—but a Being independent of, and separate from, our sensations—which “somebody or something” we call memory, remembrance, or recollection!” I must take it for granted that it will be allowed on all hands that memory, remembrance, recollection, (all words having the same meaning) are merely collective terms denoting all those sensations which we can what we call remember—just as the word *pack* is a collective term, denoting all the fifty-two cards which constitute a *pack* of cards—or all the dogs which constitute a *pack* of hounds. And that when we say “such and such an event did not happen within my memory, or remembrance, or recollection”—or, “I have no remembrance of it”—we mean precisely what he means who says, “such and such a card, or dog, is not in my *pack*—does not *make one* of my *pack*.” We mean that such and such an event or fact does not *make one* of our *pack* of remembered sensations or ideas. *Memory*, therefore, signifies a *pack* of remembered sensations or ideas. Indeed the Latin word *recollection*, which we have adopted into our language, fully explains, not only its own meaning, but also the meaning of the word *memory*, for which it is used as a substitute and equivalent. To *recollect* signifies to *collect*, or *gather together over again*—and *recollection* signifies that which has been *collected* or *gathered together over again*. When a man says: “I have a strong or retentive memory,” he merely speaks figuratively. He first poetically embodies or personifies his *pack* of remembered sensations or ideas—he endows it, when so personified, with active powers—and then speaks of it accordingly. But what he really means is this: viz. that his *pack* of sensations constantly increases—that sensations which have once come into his *pack* are never after-

wards lost. Nothing can be more frequent than this figurative manner of speaking, even with regard to the commonest inanimate objects.

The word gravitation proffers us an instance of this figurative manner of speaking. What is it which restrains the moon in her orbit round the earth? Gravitation. What is it which bridles and reins in the earth and prevents her from darting away into unknown regions? Gravitation. If a waggon, in its passage, break down a bridge, it is because gravitation pulls it so violently down towards the river that the bridge has not power to resist it. It was gravitation which took such a strong and hearty pull at the lord mayor's chandelier, some years ago, that it broke the chain, and dashed down the chandelier upon the dinner-table. It is gravitation which performs all these mighty exploits, and yet no one ever dreams of considering gravitation as a separate, veritable, active, Being—an independent spirit apart from matter! No—because the Latin derivation of the word—its etymological meaning—is so broadly manifest to those who use it, that, although they constantly employ it in this figurative manner, there is no danger of their falling into so silly an error. Yet this is precisely the error into which we have fallen with regard to the word *mind*. We have so long and constantly habituated ourselves to embody mind—to personify it into a living and moving and performing agent—and the Anglo-Saxon language, from which the word is derived, is so much less familiar to us than the Latin and Greek—that we have come at last entirely to forget that, when we use it in this figurative manner, we do but speak poetically—and its derivation from a language but little known has favored the error, and blinded us to its real meaning, and the true office and purpose which it serves in speech.

The truth is, that *memory*, *remembrance*, *recollection*, and *mind*, are, all four of them, so many different words signifying precisely the *same thing*. The only difference between them being that memory, recollection, and remembrance, (as it is *corruptly* written, but *remembrance* as it *ought* to be written) are three *Latin* words having one particular signification; and *mind* is an *English* word having the *same* one particular signification.

So that when an Englishman is reading a Latin author, and desires to translate him into the English tongue as he goes along, if he meet with the word *memoria*, (that is, memory) the only English word by which that word *memoria* can be rendered into English is the word mind. He has no other means of doing it, for the plain reason that there is no other English word which has the same signification. And if the word mind do not signify memory, then there is no word in the English language which does. It is quite manifest that he cannot render the Latin *memoria* into English by using the words memory, remembrance, or recollection. For this would be no translation at all, but a mere substitution of one Latin word for another Latin word—memory, remembrance, and recollection being, to all intents and purposes, as strictly Latin words as *memoria*—and, when first adopted into the English language, equally unintelligible to an Englishman, unless he understood the Latin language.

Now, you know, you and I are two men employed in digging for a treasure, which we are to share between us when we have found it. And we care about, and are anxious for, but one thing only—and that one thing is—how to find it. Bearing this in mind, I ask you confidently whether it be at all conceivable that the language of any people, however barbarous, should be *without* a word to signify a thing with which every one—every child—is so thoroughly intimate—a thing which every man, woman, and child, use daily as often or oftener than they do their eye-sight—a thing to which every man, woman, child, and animal, is every hour, nay, every instant, beholden for the preservation of their lives—a thing *without which* age would be no wiser than infancy—a thing to which no man can utter half-a-dozen consecutive words without referring—in fact, a thing *without which* no man could utter half-a-dozen consecutive words at all—nor three, nor two—no, nor one—a thing without which the *senses* would be almost useless, and life an intolerable misery—and yet a thing, the nature of which every plough-boy understands as well as he understands the nature of eye-sight—now I ask you—I ask you as a man—solely anxious to discover the truth—I ask you as an honest tradesman, who



is making out his account against his debtor, *the truth*—I apply to you as to an architect who is requested to state whether he does not think that the building would be more secure if such or such a piece of timber were removed, and such or such substituted in its stead—I say, sir, I ask you whether it be possible to conceive that such a thing as that which we call by the Latin name of memory should be *without a name* in any language, however barbarous, and yet the same language *have a name* for that unknown, and incomprehensible shadow of a shade—that *something* which no man has seen, felt, or heard—which no man even pretends to understand—*without which* all men (aided solely by memory) can perfectly fulfil all the offices of life—and *of which* all that the most learned can say is—that it is—*something* which performs *something*? For all that has yet been said of mind is, that it is that particular *something* which performs the operation of that particular *something* which we call *thinking*.

Having premised thus much, I now say that—as blind (as has been clearly shown by Horne Tooke) is the past participle of the Anglo-Saxon word *blinnan*, to stop, to close—contracted thus, *blined*, *blin'd*, *blind*—and signifies *eyes that are stopped or closed*: as *field*, anciently written *feld*, is the past participle of the verb *to fell*—contracted thus, *felled*, *fell'd*, *feld*, afterwards corruptly spelled *field*—and signifies *land whereon the trees have been felled*: as *dastard* is the past participle of *dastrigan*, to frighten—and signifies *one who is frightened*: as *coward* is the past participle of the verb *to cower*, or *to cower*—and signifies *one who has cower'd before an enemy*: as our pronoun *it*, spelled by the Anglo-Saxons *hæt*, is the past participle of *hætan*, to name—and signifies *the named*: as our pronoun *that*, spelled by the Anglo-Saxons *thæt*, is the past participle of *thean*, to take, to assume: as *thrift* is the past participle of the verb *to thrive*—contracted thus, *thrived*, *thriv'd*, *thrift*: as *quilt* is the past participle of the verb *to quill*—contracted thus, *quilled*, *quill'd*, *quilt*: as *gaunt* is the past participle of the Anglo-Saxon verb *gewanian*, to grow thin—contracted thus, *ge-waned*, *gewan'd*, *gewant*, *g'want*, *gaunt*—and signifies *one who is thin*: as *draught* is the past participle of the verb *to draugh* (now written *draw*)—contracted thus, *draughed*, *draugh'd*,

*draught*—and signifies that which is *draughen*, *draugh'n*, or *drawn*: as *craven* is the past participle of the verb *to crave*—and signifies one who has *craven* his life of his antagonist: as *dawn* is the past participle of the Anglo-Saxon *dagian*, to become light: as *churn* is the past participle of *cyran*, (*c* pronounced like *k*) *to move backwards and forwards*—contracted thus, *cyren*, *cyr'n*, *cyrn*, *churn*—and signifies that which is moved backwards and forwards: as *scout* is the past participle of the Anglo-Saxon *scitan*, to send out—and signifies *one who is sent out to reconnoitre*: as *sop*, *soup*, *sup*, *sip*, are the past participles of *sipan*, to sip—and signify that which is *sipped*: as *net* is the past participle of *cnittan*, to knit—and signifies that which is *knitted*: as *law* is the past participle of the Mæso-Gothic *lagjan*, to lay down—and signifies *that which is laid down*: as *short* is the past participle of the verb *to shear*—and signifies *that which is shear'd*, that is, *cut*: as *long* is the past participle of the Anglo-Saxon word *lengian*, to stretch out—and signifies *that which is stretched out*: as *town* is the past participle of the Anglo-Saxon verb *tynan*, to enclose, to encompass, to shut in—and signifies *a number of houses encompassed, shut in*—as all towns formerly were, by walls and gates: as *hoard* and *herd* are the past participles of *hyrdan*, to guard—and signify *that which is guarded*: as *knee* is the past participle of *knigan*, to bend—and signifies *that which is bent*: as *wheel* is the past participle of the Anglo-Saxon *willigan*, to turn round—and signifies *that which is turned round*: as *food* is the past participle of *fedan*, to feed—and signifies *that which is fed upon*: as *milk* is the past participle of *melcan*, to milk—and signifies *that which is milked from the cow*: as *home* is the past participle of *hæman*, to meet together—and signifies *the place where all the members of a family meet together*: as *lore* is the past participle of *læran*, to teach—and signifies *that which is taught*: as *loan* is the past participle of *hlænan*, to lend—and signifies that which is *lent*: as *fowl* is the past participle, and past tense, of *fiolgan*, to fly—and signifies *an animal that flies*: as *roof* is the past participle of *hræfnan*, to sustain—and signifies *that which is sustained, or upheld*: as *woof* is the past participle of *wefan*, to weave—and signifies *that which is woven*: as *hand* is

the past participle of *hentan*, to take hold of—and signifies *that by which anything is taken hold of*: as *grave* is the past participle of *grafan*, to scoop out—and signifies *that which is scooped out*: as *hell* (which also signifies a grave) is the past participle of *helan*, to cover over—and signifies *that which is covered over*: as *heaven* is the past participle of the verb *to heave*—and signifies *that which is upheav-ed, upheav-en, or uplifted above us*: as *tale* is the past participle of *tellan*, to tell—and signifies *that which is told*: so *MIND* (formerly written *mynd*) is the past participle of *mynan*, to remember—and signifies *that which is remembered*.

You will recollect that, sometime ago, I told you that what are called *ideas* are, in fact, *remembered sensations*. *Sensations*, then, are the *things which are remembered*. And *mind* signifies all the sensations which a man can remember—or, a man's whole pack or quantity of remembered sensations. In a word, his remembrances, his recollections, his memory—all that he can, and whatever he can, *remember*.

The Scotch, to the present day, use the verb *to mind* in the identical sense in which we use the verb *to remember*. In the Antiquary, Eddie Ochiltree says: "Prætorian here, Prætorian there, I *mind* the biggin' o't"—that is, "*I remember the building of it.*"

The word *mind* occurs in the Anglo-Saxon language under a great variety of forms. But every form of it signifies remembrance. Thus—*ge-mynd*, memory—*ge-mindlic*, memorable—*ge-myndlice*, by memory—*ge-myndig*, mindful—*myndelic*, memorable—*ge-mind*, a memorial—*ge-mind-blithe*, a grateful remembrance—*ge-mindig*, mindful—*gemindiglicnys*, remembrance. All these are the past participle *mynd*, or *mind*, compounded with other words: as *ge-mynd*—*ge-mind-lic*,—*ge-mynd-lice*—*ge-mynd-ig*—*mynde-lic*—*ge-mind*—*ge-mind-blithe*—*ge-mind-ig*—*ge-min-'d-ig-lic-nys*. This last is very curious. It is made up of no less than six different words. Thus we sometimes say: "a never-to-be-forgotten" circumstance. The verb itself, from which these past participles are derived, is also as variously spelled as the participle, as must ever be the case when there is no other guide to spelling, but the sound. Thus we have *mynd-gian*—*mind-gian*—*ge-mynd-gian*—*munan*—*gemunan*—



*gemynan* — *mingian* — *mynian* — *mynegian* — *manian* — *mœnan* (diphthong broad, like *æ* in *father*)—*gemonian*—the Latin word *moneo* certainly, and the Greek word *mnao* most probably—but they all signify alike, *to remember*. The root of all is, *myn*, *min*, *mon*, *mun*, or, as in the Greek, simply *mn*.

Mind, then, is the regular past participle of *mynan*, to remember, and has been regularly contracted into its present monosyllabic form by the same process by which numberless other words in our language have also been formed. Thus :

As *odd*—is owed, ow'd, odd :

As *head*—is heaved, heav'd, head :

As *wild*—is willed, will'd, wild :

As *flood*—is flowed, flow'd, flood :

As *loud*—is lowed, low'd, loud :

As *shred*—is shered, sh'ed, shred :

As *sherd*—is shered, sher'd, sherd :

As *field*—is felled, fell'd, field :

As *blind*—is blined, blin'd, blind, from *blinnan*, to stop :

So *mind*—is myned, myn'd, mind, from *mynan*, to remember.

The past participle *mind* having been thus converted into a noun substantive, the next operation of language, or rather of time upon language, was to convert this noun substantive into a verb. And this was done, in the usual manner, by the simple addition of the prefix *to* before it. Hence arose the Scotch verb *to mind*—that is, *to remember*. And hence arose our own English verb *to re-mind*—that is, *to put into the mind over again*. The word *memory* has undergone the same process—for, *to remember* is only a corrupt spelling of *to re-memory*—that is, *to put into the memory over again*.

All this I suppose to be perfectly clear. At least, it cannot be denied by any one who has paid any attention to the structure of our mother tongue. But he who has *admitted* Horne Tooke's system of language can no more deny it, than he who has admitted the *first* book of Euclid can deny the *second*—or than he who admits that two and two are four, can deny that four and four are eight. For he who admits the premises can, by no possible means, deny the legitimate consequences, be they what they will, without proclaiming himself—no matter what.

Now, then, I have shown, *first*, that the word *mind*, as at present used, is an unintelligible word—that is to say, that it has no power of *communicating* ideas, any more than the algebraical signs *x*, *y*, *z*.

*Secondly*, that by giving to the word *mind* the meaning of the word *memory*, it becomes at once *intelligible*—intelligible to every man in the empire, however uneducated. For there is no one who does not understand the nature of *memory*, as well as he understands the nature of smelling, hearing, tasting, &c. I beg of you to observe that I say *as well*—not *better*.

*Thirdly*, I have shown that this meaning is precisely that particular meaning which the etymology of the word proves to be *inherent in the word*—that this is precisely the meaning for the conveyance of which the word was purposely invented and contrived.

But I also promised that I would exhibit the same species of proof in favor of my doctrines concerning *mind*, which Sir I. Newton exhibited in proof of his theory with regard to the planetary motions, and which have never since been doubted.

I cannot, however, do this fully, until I have explained to you the meaning of the words *be* and *think*.

B.

The word *mind*, then, according to you, signifies what we call recollections—those pictures of things which remain in us, after the realities have ceased to impress our organs—those semblances which we call dreams—those sensations, whatever they are, to which we allude, when we *say* we can see things with our mind's eye—in a word, *ideas* of things.

A.

I care not what you call them, nor how often you ring the changes upon their name. Every man is conscious of them, and no man can live without them, and I am satisfied to call them remembered sensations, or sensations which I can remember—a phraseology which I presume every clown can perfectly understand.

B.

I shall not, however, feel satisfied unless you also explain to me the meaning of the words *sensation* and *remember*. Especially I should be glad to hear *what sensation is*.

A.

I shall not shrink from the task.

B.

I confess too that I should like to have some other authority than your own for the very high estimation in which you hold Horne Tooke's system of language.

A.

Take one then from the pen of one of the great men of your own political sect—the pen of Lord Brougham.

“But much and justly as he (Horne Tooke) was distinguished in his own time, both among popular leaders, and as a martyr for popular principles, it is as a philosophical grammarian that *his name will reach the most distant ages*. To this character his pretensions were of the highest class. Acumen not to be surpassed, learning quite adequate to the occasions, a strong predilection for the pursuit, qualified him to take the first place, and to leave the science, (scanty when his inquiries began,) enlarged and enriched by his discoveries; for discoveries he made, as incontestably as ever did the follower of physical science, by the cognate methods of inductive investigation.

“The principle upon which his system is founded excels in simplicity, and is *eminently natural and reasonable*. As all our knowledge relates primarily to things; as mere existence is manifestly the first idea which the mind can have, as it is simple without involving any process of reasoning—substantives are evidently the first objects of our thoughts, and we learn their existence before we contemplate their actions, motions, or changes. Motion is a complex, and not a simple idea: it is gained from the comparison of two places or positions, and drawing a conclusion that a change has happened. Action, or the relation between the agent and the act, is still more complex: it implies the observation of two events following one another, but until we have pursued this sequence very often, we never could think of connecting them together. Those actions which we ourselves perform are yet less simple, and the experience which teaches us our own thoughts must be accompanied with more reflection. As for other ideas of a general or abstract



nature, they are still later of being distinctly formed. Hence the origin of language must be traced to substantives, to existences, to simple apprehensions, to *things*. Having given names to these, we proceed to use those names in expressing change, action, motion, suffering, manners of doing, modes of suffering or of being. Thus verbs are employed, and they are obtained from substantives. Relations, relative positions, comparisons, contrasts, affinities, negatives, exclamations follow; and the power of expressing these is obtained from substantives and from verbs. So that all language becomes simply, naturally, rationally, resolved into substantives as its element; or substantives and verbs, verbs themselves being acquired from substantives.

“The simple grandeur of this leading idea which runs through the whole of Mr. Tooke’s system at once recommends it to our acceptation. But the details of the theory are its great merit; for he followed it into every minute particular of our language, and only left it imperfect in confining his speculations to the English tongue, while doubtless the doctrine is of universal application. He had great resources for the performance of the task he thus set himself. A master of the old Saxon, the root of our noble language; thoroughly and familiarly acquainted with all our best writers; sufficiently skilled in other tongues, ancient and modern, though only generally, and, for any purposes but that of his Anglo-Saxon inquiry, rather superficially, he could trace with a clear and steady eye the relations and derivations of all our parts of speech; and in delivering his remarks, whether to illustrate his own principles, or to expose the errors of other theories, or to controvert and expose to ridicule his predecessors, his never-failing ingenuity and ready wit stood him in such constant stead, that he has made one of the driest subjects in the whole range of literature or science, one of the *most amusing and even lively of books*; nor did any one ever take up the Divisions of Purley (as he has quaintly chosen to call it) and lay it down till some other avocation *tore* it from his hands.

“The success of this system has been such as its great essential merits, and its more superficial attractions combined, might have

led us to expect. *All men are convinced of its truth*; and as everything which had been done before was superseded by it, so nothing has since been effected, unless in pursuing its views, and building upon its *solid foundations*."

But, after having paid this well-merited tribute to the talent and learning of Horne Tooke, Lord Brougham adds: "one only fault is to be found, not so much with the system, as with its effects upon the understanding and habits of its ingenious author. Its brilliant success made him an etymologist and grammarian in everything." How clearly does this prove that Lord Brougham was wholly incapable of fathoming the depths, and of understanding the scope, tendency, and spirit of Horne Tooke's philosophy! Horne Tooke an etymologist and grammarian! I could as easily fancy him a manufacturer of babies' rattles! *He* a grammarian! *He* a gerund-grinder! *He* a quibbling dealer in words! *He!* who scorned openly them and their art! *He!* who throughout his two quarto volumes never misses an opportunity of laughing them to scorn! *He!* who has said there is but one kind of word, and that is the name of a *thing*! *He* a grammarian! *He* an etymologist! My Lord Brougham might just as well call Euclid a teacher of the A, B, C, because Euclid is obliged constantly to make use of these letters in order to demonstrate his problems. No man ever yet scorned the art of the grammarian and etymologist (considered *per se*) with half the heartiness with which Horne Tooke despised both them and their art. But what Horne Tooke did was *this*. When a man reasoned with him, he insisted upon his giving *a meaning to his words*—that is to say, he insisted upon his talking *intelligibly*—upon his making "nature the expositor of words, and not words the expositor of nature." My Lord Brougham is content both to use and to listen to words which have no meaning. Horne Tooke would listen to no words but such as had *a meaning—a meaning in nature*.

Lord Brougham proceeds: "he" (Horne Tooke) "became prone to turn all controversies into discussions on terms." My Lord Brougham, therefore, I suppose, considers it matter of little consequence whether the terms used in controversies are intelligible or not. "He saw roots and derivatives," says Lord

Brougham, "in everything." That is to say, he saw that every word had a meaning in nature. And when he heard a word used in any other sense than that which was inherent in the word, and which had its representative in nature, he insisted upon the speaker explaining what he meant before he proceeded a step further. "He was apt," says Lord Brougham, "to think he had discovered a decisive argument, or solved a political, or a metaphysical, or an ethical problem, when he had only found the original meaning of a word." But if Lord Brougham had understood Horne Tooke's philosophy (of which I herewith confidently assert that Lord Brougham is profoundly ignorant) he would have known that when once a word has lost its original meaning, it has, in fact, no meaning at all. But where in the world are we to look for the solution of *any* problem, if not to the *meaning* of the words in which that problem is couched?

"Thus," proceeds Brougham, "he would hold that the law of libel is unjust and absurd, because libel means a little book, which is no kind of proof that there may not be a substantive offence which goes by such a name, any more than forgery is denied to be a crime, although the original of the name is the very innocent operation of hammering iron softened in the fire. But he has also, in the case referred to, left wholly out of view half the phrase; for it is certain that libel or libellus is not the Latin of libel, but libellus famosus, a defamatory writing."

Now let it be granted at once that Lord Brougham's interpretation of the word libel is correct, and that it means a defamatory writing. Surely it is self-evident that in order to make any law a just law, it is necessary that it be *defined*, so that all men may know when they are infringing it and when not. Surely that must be an unjust law which is so promulgated that no man can tell when or how he breaks it? Very well—but Lord Brougham says, the law of libel is a law against defamatory writing. And Horne Tooke says that the law against defamatory writing is an unjust law, unless the law also defines wherein defamatory writing consists; so that all men may know when what they write is legally defamatory, and when not. Now it is notorious that the law does not attempt to define wherein



defamatory writing consists; and, therefore, a man may commit defamation without knowing it. And, *therefore*, Horne Tooke says that the law of libel is an unjust law. If the law say to the people: "you shall not commit such and such a crime," without at the same time telling them wherein that crime consists, surely that law must be an unjust law. To say to the people: "you shall not commit the crime of defamation," without explaining to them wherein defamation consists, is the same thing as though it said: "you shall not commit a particular crime—we will not tell you what that crime is; but when you have committed it, then we will tell you what it is, and punish you for having committed it." When, therefore, Horne Tooke said that the law of libel was unjust, because the word libel simply meant a little book, he merely intended to say, and did, in fact, say, that all laws are unjust which do not define the nature of the crimes which they caution mankind against committing. They give the law a name, but do not tell us what that name *means*. But enough—it is quite clear that Lord Brougham knows no more about Horne Tooke's philosophy than he knows of the philosophy of the man-in-the-moon.

But retournons à nos moutons.

*Mind*, therefore, I say, like *intellect*, also resolves itself into *knowledge*—into that hoard of garnered sensations—into that *pack* of remembered things—wherein all knowledge consists. And there is no one reason, or mode of reasoning, in proof of the individuality, the unity, the separate existence, the active agency of *mind*, which same reason, and which same mode of reasoning, do not go to prove, with equal force and truth, the individuality, the unity, the separate existence, the active agency of *gravitation*. And whatever argument or kind of argument will prove, or go to prove, the separate existence of mind, as *the being* which performs the operation of thinking, will in like manner prove, or go to prove, the separate existence of gravitation, as *the Being* which performs the operation of pulling—videlicet, stones to the ground—the moon to the earth—the earth to the sun—the sun to the centre round which it revolves—and so on and so on. And, in like manner, whatever will prove, or go to prove, that gravitation is *not* a separate existence,

an active being, which performs the operation of pulling, will also prove, or go to prove, that mind is *not* a separate existence, an active being, which performs the operation of thinking. If the supposition of a distinct agent be necessary in the one case, it is equally necessary in the other. If it be not necessary in the one case, it is not necessary in the other. And I defy my Lord Brougham, or any other metaphysical Oudenosopher, to gainsay this.

The more I think of the importance of words, in all controversies, the more mighty does that importance prove itself to be. We bewilder ourselves in a labyrinth of words without meaning. We can scarcely stir a step in any argument without stumbling over some word in whose hidden meaning lurks all the difficulty of the disputation. Lord Brougham says that mind "is undoubtedly connected with, but independent of, our bodily sensations." Now, at first sight, there seems nothing absurd in this passage. Because there is in it one word which is used without a meaning. But when we come to examine the meaning of that one word, we shall find that the whole sentence is manifest and glaring nonsense. That one word is the word "*connected*." What does Lord Brougham mean by "*connected*"? Now I say that it is utterly and physically impossible for any two things to be "*connected*," and yet "*independent*" of each other. To be "*connected*" signifies to be joined together as two links in a chain are joined together. This is the *literal* sense of the word. It is clear that two links of a chain are not independent of each other—that neither can move this way or that without the consent of the other—that the one cannot be supported in air without being held up by the other—that if, being suspended in air, the one falls, the other must fall also. In fact, it is quite evident that, while connected, the movements of the one are wholly dependent upon the movements of the other.

But it may be said that my Lord Brougham speaks figuratively. It may be said that he only means they are connected as two men in partnership are *said* to be connected. Then I say, they are *not connected at all*. For two men in partnership are not *really connected*, but are only *said* to be connected. They are two men who have agreed to act *as though* they

were connected. It is not that they *cannot* act apart from each, but that they *will not*. It is not that they *really are joined like two links in a chain*, but that they have agreed to act *as though they were joined* like two links in a chain. They are as separate, as distinct, as wholly disconnected, after they have entered into partnership as they were before. The word, with regard to men in partnership, is merely used by way of illustration. It merely means that two men have agreed to act as though they were joined together like two links of a chain, and could not move without each other's consent. They *can* act in opposition to each other if they please, as much after partnership as before; the only difference is that they have agreed that they *will not*; and the law will punish them if they do. If you ask a man who uses the word "connexion," with regard to two men in partnership, whether he really mean that the two men are joined together, he will acknowledge in a moment that he does not mean any such thing. My Lord Brougham, therefore, in this passage, finds himself in this dilemma. Either he uses the word "connected" in its literal sense, or he does not. If he use it in its *literal sense*, then he manifestly talks absurdly when he says that mind is connected with, and yet independent of, sensation. For this is self-evidently impossible. If he use the word figuratively, as men do when they speak of two persons being connected in partnership, or by consanguinity, then he must, like them, admit that although he *says so*, he does not *mean so*! Then I say what in the world *does* he mean?

It is this manner of speaking figuratively, and then forgetting that we do speak figuratively—it is this manner of saying what we do not really mean, and then supposing that we do really mean what we say—which has also been another prolific source of misunderstanding, and of so much metaphysical jargon. Thus we say: "the clock *tells* the hour," but we do not mean that the clock actually *speaks*, but only that it answers the same end as though it really could and did speak, and really did *tell* the hour.

But although this loose manner of conversing is all very well and admissible in ordinary conversation, it will not do at all in



matters of philosophy. In matters of philosophy, if we would talk intelligibly, and sensibly, we must say exactly what we *mean*, and no more, nor less. Poetry and philosophy are as diametrically opposed to each other as the north pole to the south.

My publisher has this day put into my hands an American work, called—a Treatise on Language ; or, the Relation which Words bear to Things, by A. B. Johnson. I have barely had time to look into it. But it is with books as with men. A fool cannot open his mouth without betraying himself. Neither can you open a sensible book at any page without seeing at once that it is a sensible book. The first sentence which caught my eye was the following : “ We make language the expositor of nature, instead of making nature the expositor of language.” Oh ! how true this is ! and how neatly and tersely expressed ! How much more forcible and comprehensive than my own manner of explaining the same fact. I allude to what I said just now, viz., that “ language was made for things, and not things for language.” If men would but take the trouble to *understand* what they read—to follow out every position into its inevitable consequences\*—this one sentence of A. B. Johnson would be all that is necessary in order to explain and to explode that mighty system of metaphysical humbug which has vexed the civilized world so long. All that could be said, were a man to write from this day to the end of time, on the cause and nature of the ridiculous tom-fooleries which have crept into philosophy, could be nothing more than an amplification, and a series of illustrations of this one sentence of A. B. Johnson : “ We make language the expositor of nature, instead of making nature the expositor of language.” THINGS were not made TO FIT WORDS, but words TO FIT THINGS.

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\* Utilitarians ! THINK ! carry out your views to their *legitimate extremes*, and observe the consequences.

## CHAPTER VIII.

TO BE.

B.

What is sensation ?

A.

I cannot answer your question unless I understand it. And I cannot understand the question unless I understand the meaning of the words wherein the question is clothed—for words are but the clothing wherein a man's meaning is wrapt up. Certainly the words themselves do not constitute the meaning of the words.

The word *is*, of itself, is nothing more than a sound—and that sound is the representative of something else which we call meaning. Now I do not know the meaning which is represented by this word *is* as you have employed it in your question. You know, as I have before explained to you, the meaning must exist in the speaker's mind before it exists in the word. That is to say, there is something in the mind of the speaker—an idea or sensation. He wishes to excite the same sensation in the mind of the hearer. In order that we may be able to do this, we (mankind) have agreed to give certain particular names to certain particular sensations, just as a man gives a particular name to every hound in his pack, which name, being associated with the particular sensation which it represents, does, on being pronounced, excite in the mind of the hearer, or call to his recollection, that particular sensation of which it is the name. Just as on pronouncing the word Ringwood, there instantly comes into your memory the sensation or idea of that particular dog, in Mr. W.'s pack of hounds, which we had occasion to mention in our last conversation, and *which* has, you say, lately

lost an eye. Now I say I do not know what particular sensation or idea you *mean* should be represented or communicated by that word *is*, when you say: "what *is* sensation?"

B.

I will not waste time by attempting to explain the particular meaning of *is*, for I confess I do not know. I am here rather for the purpose of being instructed, than for the purpose of disputing with you. There is something so perfectly novel in this mode of insisting upon a particular meaning for every particular word—something so apparently impossible—that I find myself bewildered even in the attempt to do so.

At your earnest desire I have carefully read Horne Tooke's great work, and am perfectly satisfied that his views of language are correct. But Horne Tooke has said nothing about this word *is*. He has only promised to explain it in some future conversation, which however he did not live to perform.

A.

No—but in his system he has left us the means of doing it for ourselves. He has given us the clue, which, if we follow it, will conduct us into every apartment of the labyrinth. He has put us into the right path, and we have nothing to do but to travel straight onward, and it will conduct us unerringly to the temple of truth. And for men of common sense, if they will but take the trouble to use it, this should be sufficient. If I want to travel to any particular town, surely it ought to be sufficient to show me the road which leads straight to it. It might be necessary perhaps to take a child by the hand and go along with him all the way. But for any one possessing common sense, one would suppose that to point out the straight road would be all that was necessary.

But, it seems, this has been by no means sufficient for many of the readers of Horne Tooke. He died and left them in the middle of the journey. He and they were travelling together along a road as straight as an arrow. Yet when *he* stopped, they stopped also. Straight as the road is, they do not seem to have been able to stir one step farther, after he, their guide, had left them.

According to Horne Tooke's system of language, "*that is not*



*a word which is not the name of a thing.*" And my Lord Brougham says this system of language is so "reasonable and natural"—so "simple"—so undoubtedly true—that "*all men believe it.*" And yet it is perfectly clear that either Lord Brougham does not believe it himself, or else he does not understand one word about it. For all that he has said about mind is, according to Horne Tooke's system of language, the most unqualified nonsense. According to Horne Tooke's system of language the word *mind* signifies that which one remembers. But I suppose even my Lord Brougham must acknowledge that a man cannot *remember* that which he has never seen, nor heard, nor tasted, nor smelled, nor felt! And yet my Lord Brougham declares the mind to be independent of all other things! Horne Tooke declares that "the whole business of the mind consists in having sensations." My Lord Brougham declares the mind to be a "reasoning, inferring, believing, *active Being!*" And yet this very same Lord Brougham says of this very same Horne Tooke, that his system of language is incontrovertible, and "*all men believe it.*" My Lord Brougham readily admits the premises, but has never once troubled his head about the conclusions to which those premises inevitably and directly lead—and has thus suffered himself to be betrayed into admitting that A and B are both equal to C, while, almost in the same breath, he denies that A and B are equal to one another.

You say "there is something so novel in this mode of insisting upon a meaning for every word"—yet surely you will admit that it is necessary, if we would talk sensibly and intelligibly. For a word without a meaning is clearly an unmeaning word—a mere idle noise, like the word *hem!* And if, when you ask a question, you use unmeaning words—idle noises, like the word *hem!*—how is it possible that your question can be understood? If, when you answer a question, you only make idle noises, instead of using meaning words, how can you convey instruction? If, when you talk, half the words you use be mere empty sounds, like the gabble of a goose, who can profit by your conversation? If you use a word which does not represent any meaning in you, for what purpose do you use that word? Not for the purpose of communicating your meaning, for, in that case, you have no

meaning to communicate ! Then, I say, for what purpose do you use the word at all ?

You say you do not know what you mean by that particular word *is*, as it stands in the question, “what *is* sensation ? The whole question consists of but three words, and you confess that you do not know the meaning of *two* of them ! But you certainly know the meaning of the verb *to be* ! It signifies, you know, *to exist*.

B.

Yes—I know that—and when you asked me the meaning of the word *is*, I was on the point of telling you that it means, and is equivalent to, the word *exists*. But I recollected that if two words mean the same thing, and be equivalent to each other, they are also mutually convertible. But in this question I find I cannot substitute *exists* for *is*—I cannot say, “what *exists* sensation.”

A.

It would be an unusual manner of speaking, but it would be, nevertheless, to the full as sensible a question as, “what *is* sensation ?”

But the truth is, we are in the habit of using the word *is* almost constantly in an arbitrary and spurious sense, and in a particular form of expression adapted to that spurious sense. But in this question you are using the word *is* in its *legitimate* sense ; but being unconscious of this, you are employing it in connexion with that *particular form of expression* which is only adapted to its spurious sense. For custom having taught us to use one word in the place of another—we having got into the habit of frequently expressing a particular meaning by using a word to which that meaning does not properly belong—and not being conscious of this arbitrary substitution of one word for another—we do not know when we use it in its spurious sense, and when in its legitimate sense. I will endeavour to illustrate this, for it is exceedingly important ; since, “so far as we know not our own meaning, we do but gabble like things most brutish.”

Now attend. Suppose you and I are walking in Hyde Park, and your attention is attracted to one particular gentleman as

he rides past us. And suppose you point to that gentleman, and say to me, "who is that?" And suppose I say, in reply, "that is the Duke of Wellington." Would not that answer satisfy the question fully?

B.

Certainly.

A.

You will admit that my answer is a full proof that I understood your meaning—and that you did really mean exactly what I *guessed* you to mean?

B.

Undoubtedly.

A.

Then why did you not *say* what you *meant*? Why did you not say: "by what *name* do men *call* that gentleman?" or, "how do you *call* that gentleman?" or, "how *name* you that gentleman?" You acknowledge that this is what you meant, and it is quite clear (whether you acknowledge it or not) that this is what you did mean. Then I say, why do you not always say what you mean, by using words in their proper and legitimate sense?

That my answer satisfied your question is sufficient proof that when you said, "who is that gentleman?" you really meant "how *name* you that gentleman?" But if, for argument's sake, you deny that you meant what I have supposed, then I say your question is null—it is a mere senseless gabble.

But you may, in order to puzzle me, and for argument's sake, affirm that my answer did not fully satisfy your question—that you wanted to know more—and that, in order fully to satisfy you, I ought to have told you that, "it was the gentleman who conducted to a victorious conclusion the peninsular war—who fought and won the battle of Waterloo, &c. &c." But to this I reply, that to satisfy *you* is one thing, and to satisfy your *question* is quite another. If you wanted more information you should have asked more questions. The rest of the information is an answer to a question which you *did not ask*. It is an answer to the question: "for what exploits is that gentleman celebrated?" or, "how has his life been spent?" or some



question of that sort. But as you did not ask this question, I was not called upon to answer it. Although, therefore, my answer might not satisfy you, it satisfied your one question fully, and that is sufficient. In ordinary conversation, I may take it for granted that you desire to know more than is implied in the simple question. But in argument, if we would argue clearly, *nothing* must be taken for granted. The questioner must say exactly what he means and no more; and his opponent must reply to that meaning and no more. The proverb "one thing at a time" is no where more necessary to be observed than in argument, if we would arrive at any sound conclusion.

Your question, if it mean *more than one thing*, becomes general, and can only receive a *general* answer. But all generals are made up of several particulars. And it is manifestly impossible for me to reply to these particulars, unless you tell me what they are. Reduce your general question to the particulars whereof it is composed, and state them one at a time, and I can and will, then, answer them all.

If, when you say: "who is that man?" you desire to know several other things besides his name, only tell me what those *several other things* are which you desire to know, and I can then inform you. If, besides his name, you want to know where he lives, and where he was born, and what he has been doing all his life, how can I reply to these particular questions if you do not ask them?

When a child goes out for the first time with his father, his reiterated question is: "what *is* that? what *is* that?" and having, in answer, been told its *name*, he then proceeds to ask other questions, as: "what *is* it for?" And even here the word *is* means *name*. The child really means what do you call the *name* of the purposes to which it is applied—and having heard these purposes *named* by his father, he is satisfied. He does not require his father to *show* him the purposes in the act of being fulfilled. He is satisfied to hear them *named*, if, being *named*, he can understand them. Thus, if the child see a ferry-boat in the river, his first question is—"what *is* that?" to which the ready answer is: "a ferry-boat." "What is a ferry-boat for, papa?" is the next question. To this the ready

answer is : “to carry people across the water;” and the child is satisfied. He wanted to know, first, the *name* of what he saw, in order that when he heard that *name* he might know, that is, remember, the object indicated by that name; and henceforward the sound of the word ferry-boat becomes associated in the child’s mind with the recollection of the object which he then saw; and whenever he hears the word ferry-boat, the sensation, or idea, or recollection of that object will become present to his imagination. The sensation, or as we say, the idea of a ferry-boat has now become one of the child’s pack of remembered things or sensations, known to him by the name of ferry-boat, just as the dog Ringwood is one of Mr. W.’s pack of hounds, known to you and the huntsmen by the *name* of Ringwood. The *word* ferry-boat is, to that child, the sign of a *remembered* ferry-boat.

Secondly, he wanted to know the *name* of the purpose to which a ferry-boat is applied. His father told him the name of this purpose, viz. “To-carry-people-across-the-water.” This whole sentence is the *name* of the purpose of the ferry-boat. And the child is satisfied with the *name* of the purpose—he does not require to *see* the purpose accomplished. He can understand it without. For, having in his mind the several sensations of people, water, ferry-boat, the two banks of the river, &c., he can (as we say) fancy the boat full of people, and in the act of moving over the water across the river. But let us inquire a little wherein this said *fancying* consists. It happens thus. On hearing the sentence: “to carry people across the water”—the *things* represented by the principal words of that sentence being associated in the child’s mind with the sound of the words—there comes into his mind the remembrance of those things—a picture in which those things form the principal objects. And on hearing the word “ferry-boat” uttered in connection with the other words—those words which his father employed to name the purpose of a ferry-boat—a remembered ferry-boat is added to the other objects constituting the picture. The sentence, “to carry people across the water” suggests to the child’s mind a picture, whereof the chief objects are water, the two banks of the river, and people standing on one bank and

requiring to be transported to the other. Having been shown a ferry-boat and told its purpose, the idea of a ferry-boat is immediately added to the picture, while the arrangement of the objects is changed. The child now sees (in his imagination, as we say) a ferry-boat near one bank; he sees people stepping into it; he sees them presently in the middle of the river, and finally stepping out of the boat upon the opposite bank. Therefore, I say, having heard the *name* of the *purpose* of a ferry-boat, he does not require to see that purpose accomplished, because he understands the meaning of that name—that is to say, he has in his memory all those sensations which are represented by the several words composing that name, which words suggest to him the things which they represent—a picture of the purpose of a ferry-boat in the act of accomplishment. But if you tell the child that the purpose of the ferry-boat is to perform the operation of blynamming, or the operation of thinking, or reflecting, then I say the child would *not* be satisfied with the *name* of this purpose, but would require his father to *show* him the purpose in the act of accomplishment, because he would not *understand* the meaning of the name—that is to say, he would not have in his memory any sensation, or sensations, or ideas, represented by the words blynamming, thinking, or reflection.

I will just call upon you here to observe, *en passant*, the meaning of the word *know*. When I say that the child *does know* the meaning of the word ferry-boat, it is clear that the words “*does know*” signify “does remember”—that is, does remember an object called ferry-boat. And that when I say the child does not *know* the meaning of the word blynamming—I clearly mean that he does not *remember* an object or objects called by that name.

When, therefore, like the child, in ordinary conversation, we point to an object we never saw before, and say: “What is that?” we use the word *is* in its spurious sense, arbitrarily substituting it for the verb *to name*. And this particular spurious meaning of the word *is* demands a particular form—a particular arrangement of words—in enunciating the question, which is not suited, according to the genius of the English tongue, to its legitimate meaning.



When the verb *to be* is used as a substitute for the verb *to name*, the same arrangement of words is required as though the verb *to name* were actually itself used. As you observe, we cannot say, "what *exists* that?" although something like this is what we really *mean*. Such and so complicated is the confusion arising from the use of words in an arbitrary sense. Sometimes using a word in its arbitrary sense, and sometimes in its legitimate sense, and not knowing when we do the one and when the other, if we be suddenly asked what we mean by the word, we really cannot always tell. And this is more especially the case when the arbitrary sense requires one form of expression, and the legitimate sense another; and when we change the meaning of the word without changing the form of the sentence wherein that word is used. Thus, in your question, the word *is* has its legitimate sense of *exist* (the meaning of which I will explain by and bye). But when I asked you whether this was your meaning, you said, no; because you recollected this meaning would not suit that particular form of expression—because you could not say, "what *exists* sensation?" But had you altered the form of expression so as to suit the altered meaning of the word *is*—that is, altered from its frequent arbitrary meaning to its legitimate meaning—had you used the word *how* instead of *what*—then you could have substituted the word *exist*—and you could then have said: "*how*"—that is, "after what manner, does sensation exist?"

B.

But had I used the word *how*, then I could not have used the word *is*.

A.

Why not?

B.

It has an extremely awkward sound at least.

A.

That is simply because we hardly ever interrogatively use the word *is* in its legitimate sense of *exists*, but almost always in its spurious sense of *name*. So that whenever we are, as it were, driven, as I am now driving you, to use it in its legitimate sense, and with the necessary and corresponding form of speech,

it has a strange and unwonted sound. But we do sometimes use this word in its legitimate sense even interrogatively. And then we always use the word *how* also. Thus we say: "how *is* your health now?" and sometimes, "how *stands* your health now?" (I pray you to mark the use of this word *stands*. Because I shall have occasion to show you presently that to *exist* means to *stand*.) In this question: "how *is* your health," we mean "after what manner does your health now exist." "Does it exist now in a better or worse condition than formerly?" Our meaning, in this question, is self-evident, and therefore we always say *how*, and not *what*. And because we frequently ask this question, and because we always couple it with the word *how*, therefore it does not in this particular instance seem awkward.

When you ask me: "what *is* sensation?" you use that form of expression which is only suitable when the speaker desires to know the name of a thing. But this is clearly not your meaning, because the question itself names the name, and proves that you already know it. Since then you do not use the word *is* in its spurious sense, neither must you use that peculiar form of expression which is only suited to the spurious sense. Using the word in its legitimate sense you must also use that form of expression which is suited to that sense; your question will then become intelligible, and capable of being answered. For your question: "what *is* sensation?" is only unanswerable because it is unintelligible—because it does not point to any specific and definite information which you desire to have imparted to you. It is this loose, elliptical, and unintelligible employment of the word *is* in this interrogative form which, of itself, has contributed most largely to those metaphysical so-called difficulties which have distracted the brains of so many learned men. "What is mind?" "what is sensation?" "what is matter?" "what is pain?" "what is thought?" say they. To all this, I reply: "gentlemen, only tell me *what you mean*, and I will answer you. To me your words are unintelligible; and if you cannot tell me what they mean, I must conclude that they are equally unintelligible to yourselves, and so mean nothing at all; and are, therefore, just as unanswerable as is the creaking of a door upon its hinge—and for the same reason.

"I know by the mere fact of your speaking that you mean something, but the words which you use do not indicate, do not define, that particular something, so as to make it distinctly intelligible to me. The information which you *desire* is *particular*, while that which you ask for is *general*. It is as though you had in your mind the remembrance of some *one particular tree*, and should desire me to draw an exact representation of it on paper, without telling me what particular tree it was which you meant, but merely that it was *a tree*. Tell me what particular tree it is which you desire to have represented on paper and I will draw it."

And so, only tell me what particular information you desire to obtain about sensation, and I will answer you.

Whenever a dog barks he has a meaning. That is to say, there is in the dog some sensation which is the *cause of his barking*. But he has no means of particularizing that sensation—no means of distinguishing it from other sensations—because the language of a dog is wholly general. He has but one name for all his sensations, viz. what we call barking. When a dog barks, therefore, we do not know his meaning. It is not that he has no meaning, but that he has no means of making his meaning common to himself and us at the same time—that is, of *communicating* it—for want of *particular terms*. When a dog wants any thing, he barks. But we cannot satisfy that want, because, although we know by his barking that he wants something, we cannot tell what that *particular something* is which he wants.

It is the same with your question. I know by your speaking that you *want* some information about sensation, but I cannot satisfy your want until you have told me *what that particular something* is which you want. Your question, as you put it, indicates no more than the barking of a dog.

But you certainly cannot mean, "what is the *name* of sensation," because the question itself, as I have before said, names the name; which shows that it is not the name after which you are inquiring.

What you mean, if you mean anything, must, therefore, I suppose, be this: "*after what manner* does sensation exist?"



What is its mode of existence? *After the manner of what other thing* does sensation exist? Does it exist after the manner of matter? or any particular form of matter? Does it exist after the manner of a stone? or of water? or of air? or of a tree? or of an animal? What is the *kind* of its existence? That is, to what other existence is the existence of sensation *of kin*—for that is the meaning of the word *kind*. In a word, the question means, “what is sensation like?” For when we are inquiring about a thing which we do not know—a thing which, having never seen it, heard it, felt it, tasted it, or smelled it, we cannot of course *remember*—a thing, the likeness or picture or sensation of which does not exist in our pack of remembered things—the only way in which our inquiry can be satisfied—the only way in which we can derive a tolerably correct idea of it, is by being informed what it is like—by having it drawn on paper, and then by being told that it is like that drawing—or by being reminded of something which we do remember, and by being told that it is like that remembered thing. Thus if a man ask me: “what is a gazelle?” his question is sufficiently satisfied if I tell him it is an animal resembling a deer. But after all, he cannot thus acquire a strictly correct idea of a gazelle. His idea of a gazelle will only be the idea of a deer associated with the *name* of a gazelle. And this mode of acquiring ideas is sufficiently correct for all ordinary purposes, but not for the purposes of science or philosophy. If he would have a strictly correct idea of a gazelle, nothing in the world can give him that but the sight of a gazelle.

If the thing after which a man inquires be *of kin* to nothing else in nature, then his question: “what *is* it?” can only be satisfied by causing him to see it, hear it, feel it, taste it, or smell it.

Whenever, therefore, we use the word *is* in such questions as: “who *is* that?” “what *is* that?” &c. what we desire to know is merely the particular name of that particular thing or person. But when the question itself names the thing, then *is* (if it have any meaning at all) has the sense of the word *exists*. And the question, “what *is* sensation?” is an elliptical way of saying “after *what manner*, or, after the manner of what, does

sensation exist?" which is clearly equivalent to, "what other thing is sensation like?" And to this question I reply: "it has no similitude in nature." Are you satisfied?

B.

No.

A.

What is it then which you desire to know? Only tell me what that particular information is which you want me to give you, and I will do so.

B.

You embarrass me, I confess. But still I am quite sure that I have a meaning.

A.

But I suppose you will admit that it is impossible for me to reply to your meaning, unless you *make me know what* that meaning is—and it is that for which I wait.

B.

I want to know as much about sensation as I do about that chair, and to understand its nature as well.

A.

That is to say, you want to be able to *see it* and *feel it*. But to require me to make you *see a sensation* is absurd. You might as well desire me to make you taste the moon, or smell the national anthem, "God save the Queen." The fact is clear that you do not know what you mean. The question is general, and, if it have a meaning at all, it means everything *in general*, but nothing *in particular*. But before it can be answered satisfactorily it must have a *particular* meaning; and this particular meaning can only be ascertained by fixing the meaning of every word whereof the sentence is composed; and then you will find no more difficulty about this question than about any other question, however common. As it stands now, it consists of words which are *words merely*. They are arranged, indeed—but the arrangement is according to the rules of grammar, not according to any rule of nature. It has no more significance than if I were to ask you: "what is the sound of a loaf of bread?" It is merely a definite number of words arranged according to grammar, but indicating, that is, pointing

towards, that is, directing the attention to, that is, *causing me to remember*, or, as we say, to see with my mind's eye, *no particular thing or things in nature*. It is "*vox et præterea nihil*." It consists of shadows without substance. It is composed of words which have been vacated by their several meanings, and which, having been so vacated, are no longer anything more than x, y, z. Besides all this, it speaks of sensation as though it were the name of a unit in nature, as tree, or house, or horse; and you seem to expect that it is something which can be recognised by more senses than one, as most visible objects can—but not all, for you cannot see the wind.

I will reduce the words of the question to a definite meaning—I will show you what they signify in nature. You may, if you please, tell me afterwards that this is not the meaning which you intended. But we shall have gained a point. We shall then know (whatever meaning may be in you) what that meaning was which was in those who first invented the words, and which is still inherent in the words, and which the words *will communicate* to those who understand their signification *in spite of themselves*. For it is not a *matter of choice* whether a word shall communicate a particular meaning or not. If the word be understood, it will do so in spite of us. And if it be not understood, it has ceased to fulfil the office of a word, and, properly speaking, is no longer a word. And this is the case with the words which you use in your question.

If I utter the word spoon, that sound causes me to remember a spoon, whether I like it or not. But the words of your question (as used by you) cause me to remember nothing, and (as I believe) are the signs of nothing which is remembered by you.

When I have told you what these words do really signify, if you deny that it is what you intended, it will then be incumbent on you to *make me know* what it was which you did intend. And you will be reduced to the necessity of admitting that, until you can do this, your question is nothing but a series of unintelligible words.

You know, whenever we want to convert a noun into a verb, we do so in a moment, merely by prefixing the little word *to* to it—thus from ship we make *to ship*, as "*to ship goods*"—from



fire we have *to* fire, as “*to* fire a house,” “*to* fire a gun”—from house we get *to* house, (giving the *s* the sound of *z* as though it were spelled *houze*) as, “I hope to be able *to* house all my corn before night”—from finger we make *to* finger, as, “I desire you not *to* finger those things.” The Anglo-Saxons converted their nouns into verbs by adding the little words *an*, *ian*, *gan*, and sometimes *on* to the end of them.

## B.

All that is very clear, and you have said the same thing two or three times before.

## A.

Yes—it is clear to the learned—and to those who know the fact already it is sufficient to mention it once. But if you desire to make a thing known to those who do not know it already—to say it a hundred times is often not sufficient to make them remember it. Horne Tooke said, “that is not a word which is not the sign of a thing.” He also said that he had no further concern with etymology than as it afforded a correct notion (*not of words*) but of things. He said, too, that he arrived at his system of language by *à priori* reasoning, and not by the study of languages; but that he afterwards applied himself to the study of language to see whether the actual structure of actual languages would bear out his system—to see whether he could find, in the structure of language, that which he ought to find there, if his previous conclusions drawn from *à priori* reasoning were *true*. But then he only said these things *once*. And the very natural consequence has been that these remarks have been entirely overlooked or forgotten, and the very end and object of his work wholly misunderstood. In spite of his *one* declaration that he was but slightly concerned with etymology, one of his greatest admirers, Lord Brougham, calls him an etymologist and grammarian.

Had he repeated these important remarks in every third page, it would have been far otherwise.

But let us proceed. This little word *to*, you know, being the past participle of a northern verb signifying to act, to perform, to do, means something, anything, done. By coupling, therefore, the word *to* with a noun—that is, the name of a thing—

we also couple with that noun the notion of something done ; and the nature of the thing signified by the noun suggests to the mind the nature of the action intended. Something *done* is a general term, like the word *fact*, conveying no definite information. But when this general term is coupled with the name of a particular thing, the general term instantly becomes particular ; because particular things are associated in our minds with those particular actions which we usually see performed by those particular things, or with reference to those particular things.

Thus the name of a thing suggests to the mind the thing *merely*. But when “something done” is added to the name of the thing, then that *particular something* which we are accustomed to see *done* by that particular thing, or in connexion with it, is instantly brought to the mind also. Thus the word *gun* signifies a gun *merely*. But the verb *to gun*, or *to go a-gunning*, signifies, not only a gun, but also something *done* by or with reference to a gun. And the nature of that something which is *done*, is clearly defined by the nature of the thing spoken of in connexion with it, viz. a gun ; for while the word *to* suggests to the mind merely something *done*, the word *gun* suggests at the same moment that particular something which we have been accustomed to see performed by a gun.

To go a-gunning, therefore, signifies to go a-gun-acting, or acting with a gun. But the action is not always performed *by* the thing mentioned, but often only with reference to it. And whether the action be performed *by* the thing, or only (as we say) *upon* the thing, is determined merely by suggestion—that is to say, by what we have been accustomed to see, and what we remember. Thus to go a-birding does not signify to go a-bird-acting, that is, acting with or by a bird, but only with reference to a bird. The bird is not the instrument by means of which we act, but it is the object which determines the manner of our acting, and forms the end, the achievement of which is the cause of our acting. But in both instances the speaker is perfectly understood, because by making the hearer remember the things spoken of, he cannot help also remembering the particular sort of actions which are associated in his memory with those two

particular things. To go a-gunning does not necessarily imply the shooting of birds. A man may only shoot deer. Nor does to go a-birding necessarily imply the taking of birds by means of a gun. A man may take birds by means of snares. But to go a-gunning does *necessarily* signify to do what men generally do with a gun. And to go a-birding does necessarily suggest to the mind those actions which men generally perform whose object is the taking of birds. But if a man had never seen nor heard of birds being taken by any other means than by killing them with a gun, then to *his* mind to go a-birding would necessarily signify to go a-gunning. Because the word bird could not suggest to his mind actions in connexion with birds which he had never seen performed in connexion with birds.

The word *bow* signifies a bow *merely*. But *to bow* signifies "something more" than a bow merely. Besides a bow, it signifies something *done* by, or to, or in connexion with, or after the manner of, a bow. And this something *done*, is that very "*something more*" which Horne Tooke declared characterized the noun after it had been made into a verb—and which constituted the only difference between a noun and a verb. The noun, said he, is the name of a thing; and a verb is also the name of a thing; but then it is also the name of "something more." The explanation of this "something more" he refused to make at that time; but deferred to some future conversation, which, however, he did not live to hold. "If you finish thus," says his colloquist, "you will leave me much unsatisfied. What is the verb? What is that peculiar differential circumstance which, added to the definition of a noun, constitutes the verb?" To this Horne Tooke replies: "I am not in the humor at present to discuss with you the meaning of Mr. Harris's—'whatever a *thing* may *be*, it must first of necessity *be*, before it can *be* anything *else*'—with which precious jargon he commences his account of the verb. No. We will leave off here for the present."

To bow, therefore, signifies to do with ourselves what we are accustomed to see done with bows, viz. to bend ourselves. The word *to*, merely signifies *generally* something *done*; while the word bow reduces that general something to a particular some-



thing—that is, tells you what that something is—viz. that which is *done* with regard to bows.

To dog one's steps is to do that which a dog does when he pursues an animal of chase. *To* signifies something *done*—*dog* defines that something; and suggests to the mind the particular sort of action intended. "I desire you to dog that man's steps." "I desire you *to*," signifies merely, "I desire something *done* by you." But what is that something which you are desired to perform? Then follows the word *dog*, which instantly answers the question, by suggesting to the mind that particular sort of actions which dogs are employed to perform with regard to animals of chase. The word *dog* follows so closely upon the word *to* that the hearer has not time actually to ask this question. The question is rendered unnecessary by being answered before it is conceived. But if the speaker were to break off at the word *to*—if he were merely to say, "I desire you *to*"——the question would be actually asked by the hearer—"to *do* what?" he would say. "What is it you desire me to *do*?" And the nature of this question—his use of the word *do*—proves infallibly that he perfectly understood the meaning of the word *to*. It proves beyond question that he knew you required something to be *done*, although he did not know what that particular something was, until you mentioned the word *dog*. There is not any clown who would not know that you desired to have something *done* by him, were you to say to him, "I desire you *to*"—and then leave off speaking. And, therefore, there is not any clown who does not perfectly understand the meaning of the word *to*; although, if you should ask him what it means, he certainly would not be able to *tell* you. But this is only from not knowing how to clothe its meaning in words. What you call *knowing the meaning of the word to*, is, *the being able to clothe that meaning in other words* which is now clothed in the word *to*.

But to *know* the meaning of a word, and to *tell* the meaning of a word, are two exceedingly different things. This is of such immense importance, and I shall so shortly have occasion to allude to it more particularly, that I must now endeavour to impress it on your memory by repeating it—to *know* the mean-

ing of a word, and to *tell* the meaning of a word are two quite different things—the one being to *know a word*, and the other to *know a thing*.

“I desire to house myself from the storm.” I desire something *done* with myself in order to avoid being wetted. What is that something which I desire to have *done* with myself. Is it to be clothed in a great coat? No. Is it to have an umbrella expanded over me? No. What then is that particular something which I desire to have done with myself, and, in this instance, *by* myself? Then comes the word house, and answers the question at once, by suggesting to the mind that particular class of actions which men perform with regard to a house, and in order to enable them to perform which, houses are expressly built, viz. to go into it, and to dwell in it for a season, in order to be sheltered by it.

But this is so exceedingly simple and plain that I cannot suppose it necessary to dwell longer upon it. To me it seems astonishing that it is not to all men self-evident. And it would be so, were not men accustomed to attend merely to the *sound* rather than to the *meaning* of the words they use. But they have been taught to consider words as of so little importance, that they never think about them at all, either as words merely, or as the signs of things. It is perfectly true that words, quasi words, and words merely, are of no more consequence than the creaking of a door, or any other idle noise. And so a bank-note, as a bank-note merely, is of no more use or value than a lady's curl paper. But bank-notes considered as the representatives of gold are of very great importance, and demand to have great attention paid to them, in order to assure ourselves that they are *bonâ fide* representatives of gold—that they are not factitious—that they are such as can be *converted into gold* whenever the holder of them chooses. So of words—as words merely, they are unimportant. But as the representatives of things, they demand great attention, in order to assure ourselves that the words we use and hear are *not* words *merely*, but *such* words as have a *bonâ fide* meaning, and can be *converted into things* whenever he for whose behoof they are used—that is, the bearer—chooses to demand it. And yet those very persons who are so loud in

decrying all attention to words, are the very persons who (unconsciously and because, in fact, they know nothing about either them or their use) are perpetually talking of nothing else but words; and in all their inquiries (as I shall show directly) do, in reality, inquire after nothing but *words*.

But now let us return to the word *be*. Are you quite sure you have not already forgotten what I have just told you about the word *to*?

B.

Quite sure.

A.

Very well. The word *be* then is an old northern word, signifying a house, or habitation, of any sort, of which fact you may readily convince yourself by consulting Jamieson's *Hermes Cythicus* (a very different sort of *Hermes*, I trow, from the *Hermes* of Mr. Harris), Dr. Bosworth's *Anglo-Saxon Lexicon*, &c. The word *be*, therefore, signifying a *house*; the *verb to be*, is exactly equivalent to our *verb to house*. And what is the meaning of the *verb to house*? Observe, I do not say to house goods, or to house from the storm, but simply *to house*. If, as you assured me just now, you have not already forgotten what I told you is the force of the word *to*, you will see in an instant what must be the meaning of the *verb to house*. It means to do that with regard to a house which those things do which possess houses—that is, to dwell sometimes in a house—to go in and out of a house—to perform the actions of those things which possess houses. But what are those things which possess houses? Living beings. All living things have houses—dwelling-places. The fox has his hole, the rabbit its burrow, the hare its form, the eagle her eyrie, the smaller birds their nests and trees, the lion his lair, the caterpillar its leaf, the whale has the whole ocean, the eel its hole in the mud, the very earth-worm its tiny burrow in the soil, the snail carries his house upon his back.

To house, therefore, is to do what those things do which have houses. But as living things only have houses, to house is to do what *living things* do; that is to say, to perform the actions of living things—in one word, to live—to have life—to move in



and out of a house as living things, and no things, but living things, do or can do. I say *to be* is exactly equivalent to our verb *to live*. It means to *make use* of a house and to perform other actions, *after the manner* of those things which have houses, viz. living things. The *to* denotes *the something done*, and the *be*, or the house, defines the nature of that something, by suggesting to the mind those particular actions which are already associated (in the memory) with the sound of those words.

To *be*, therefore, in its purely primitive sense, signifies to perform the actions of living things; and in strictness of propriety, those things only which have life can be said to *be*. But, by universal consent, and because we have other words which we now use in this exclusive sense, such as *to live*, its meaning has been extended so as to embrace also, the sense of the word *to exist*—which is, however, widely different—and traces of this difference are still preserved unconsciously by us in our manner of using these words, although we know not *the reason* of the distinction which we make. Thus we never apply the word being to a stock or a stone—but only to living things. The reason of this I shall now show you.

The verb *to exist* is a Latin word transplanted into our language, and is equivalent to our verb *to stand*. But it is no more an English word than an African black would become an English man by being transplanted into an English hospital, and there having both his legs amputated. It is equivalent with our verb *to stand*, and since the two words mean the same thing, it is indifferent which we use; but, being Englishmen, let us talk English. We don't want this word *exist*—we have an equivalent word in our own language—then why not use it? Why should Englishmen talk Latin? Why should they speak to each other in a foreign language which they *do not understand*? There is no reason why they should speak in Latin—but there is an excellent reason why they should *not*, viz. because, not understanding the language in which they speak, they cannot, of course, understand each other. For instance, if this foreigner—this exotic word *exist*—had never been introduced—if we had always continued to use our own equivalent word *stand*—we should never have quarrelled about those mysterious

non-entities called existences, substances, &c. And I think, even now, we shall cease to quarrel if we will but take the trouble to remember that *to exist* is a Latin verb which we use instead of our own verb *to stand*; and that when we say, “does so and so exist?” we are talking Latin; and that, when we translate what we say into English, it will be, “does so and so *stand*?” And that when we talk about existences, substances, &c. we are merely using Latin words which, being translated into English, signify *things which stand*. Our forefathers were satisfied to use their own language, and therefore always understood each other. Where we now say *to exist*, they said *standan*. And they also said *standan* where we now say *to stand*.

But, as I have said before, when men began to dispute and ask questions—when they began to become metaphysicians—when they ceased to be satisfied with the five instruments for the acquirement of knowledge wherewith God had provided them—I mean the five senses—when they began to try to *talk* knowledge into themselves—they soon became involved in numberless mysteries and contradictions, and their conversation became unintelligible to their hearers. This obliged the hearers to inquire after their meaning. And the speakers, not having a clear notion of the use and purposes of speech, and of the difference between words and things, thought they had satisfied the hearer’s question, and given him a *meaning*, when they had only given him another *word*. And in order to reconcile real contradictions, they imagined subtile and unreal distinctions—imagining they had found a distinction in *things*, when they had only found a difference in *words*—or a different word. They attempted to explain *things* by *words*, which is absurdly impossible. Words can only explain words. Nothing can explain things but one or more of the animal senses.

And the hearers were silenced by this mode of reasoning. They were silenced, because, being themselves equally ignorant of the true nature and use of words, and equally unable to give any better explanation, they had nothing to say in reply. But though silenced, they were not satisfied. And they were not satisfied because they still felt that they *wanted something more*, although they did not know what that something was which

they did want. And whenever any one ventured to say that he wanted something more, or that he was not satisfied, then the other triumphantly desired him to say what it was which he wanted more. But the other could not tell him, and therefore was once more silenced. But he still felt that he was not satisfied. And thus an angry and bitter feeling was engendered between the disputants. And the people, the lookers on, seeing that all these angry bickerings and bitter disputations ended in nothing but words whose meaning none could explain, got tired of such unsatisfactory discussion. And so metaphysics and metaphysicians fell into disrepute and entire neglect. And *such* metaphysics and *such* metaphysicians deserved nothing better.

I have said men fancied (and they still fancy so) that they had found the meaning of a word, when they had only found another word meaning the same thing. Thus if you asked a man what he meant when he declared such and such a thing *to be*, he would tell you that *to be* meant *to exist*; and having thus given you another word in exchange for the word *be*, he would fancy that he had satisfied your question. But *to be* and *to exist* (*as ordinarily used*) mean the same thing. What information, therefore, would you gain by having one word thus substituted for another? You would have asked for the *meaning* of a word, and would only have gained *another word*—all he would have done would have been to exchange a word for a word, whereas you wanted him to exchange a word for the meaning of a word. This accounts for the introduction into language of so many foreign words. For since words have to do the duty—the double duty—of both words and meanings, it became necessary that there should be several words to signify one thing, in order that when a man was asked the meaning of a word, he might have another word meaning the same thing ready to give as the meaning of the word he used first. But his own language would, in most, if not in all instances, supply him with only one word for one thing. It was, therefore, necessary for him to go to other languages. And when he had found in another language a word equivalent with his own, he gave to all inquirers that word as the *meaning* of his own word, and expected them to be satisfied. And when he was desired



to define what he meant by any one word, instead of defining *what he meant* by the word, he only defined the word itself. He defined the sign instead of defining the thing signified. He defined *one* word by *another* word, or by many *other* words. But *things* cannot be defined by *words*. They can only be defined by the art of the painter.

Our word *to stand*, then, is exactly equivalent to the Anglo-Saxon word *stand-an*, and to the Latin word *exist*. But *stand* signifies a rock, and *to stand* (in the ordinary and limited use of the word) signifies to hold one's self erect as the rock does. But this is only its *particular* meaning. But *to stand*, when used as we now use the word *to exist*, and as our forefathers actually did use the word *stand*, has a general sense, although it still signifies to do what the rock does—viz. to *occupy room* in the universe *after the manner* of a rock, and all such things in *general* which, like the rock, are destitute of life, and *not after the manner* of the things which have houses, viz. living things. The word *to*, as usual, signifies something *done*, while the word *stand* (or *exist*) signifying a rock, suggests to the mind what that particular something is, viz. to occupy room, or a place, or space, in the universe, and *nothing more*.

The sum of all this is that the verb *to be* signifies, to occupy a place in the universe after the *manner* of things which have houses. While *to exist*, or *to stand*, signifies to occupy a place in the universe after the *manner* of a rock, or any other unorganized mass of matter.

The Anglo-Saxons had another word also signifying *to be*. It was *wun-ian*—and this word also signifies house—for it is made out of the word *wun-enes*, which means a house, a dwelling-place, a habitation. Our English word *to won*—that is, to dwell—is the same word.

*Wic-ian* is another word equivalent with *be*; and is also made out of a noun signifying a house. *Wic* is a house, and *wic-ian* (according to the Anglo-Saxon manner of making verbs) or *to-wic* (according to our manner of doing it) means to do as those things do which have habitations—that is, to dwell, to be, to inhabit—to occupy a place after the manner of those things which have *wics*—that is, houses.

## B.

It seems to me that any word which necessarily suggests to the mind actions which can only be performed by living beings would do as well as the word *house*.

## A.

Exactly. And accordingly the Latin word signifying *to be*, viz. the word *esse*, does, in fact, signify to eat—and its force is to occupy a place in the universe *after the manner* of those things which eat, viz. living things.

And so also any word which necessarily suggests to the mind the one sole act or fact of occupying place *merely*, without the ability to perform any living action of any kind, will do just as well as the Latin word *exist*, or the Anglo-Saxon *standan*. For the object of having two words at all—viz. *standan* and *beon*—that is, to occupy space after the manner of rocks, and to do the same thing after the manner of things which have houses—I say, the object merely is to distinguish between things which live, and things without life. Any other word, therefore, such as pebble or stock, made into a verb by prefixing *to*, would do just as well as to exist, or to stand. To pebble, or to stone, or to rock-stock-and-stone, would signify exactly what is signified by the verb to stand, when used in its general, and not in its particular sense. To rock-stock-and-stone would mean to occupy place after the manner of rocks, stocks, and stones, and *not* after the manner of things which have houses.

When matter, therefore, ceases *beon*, to be, it then begins *standan*, to be. And when it ceases *standan*, to be, it then begins *beon*, to be. That is to say, when matter ceases *beon*, to occupy space after the manner of living things, it then begins *standan*, to occupy space after the manner of stocks and stones. And when the elements into which it was resolved when it ceased *beon*, to be, and began *standan*, to be, shall have been reorganized, and shall have been again made to form a part of living animals, then it begins, once more, *beon*, to be.

We will now proceed; and whenever we should otherwise have used any part of the verb *to be*, we will use the verb *to house*. And when we should otherwise have used the verb *to exist*, we will now use the verb *to stand*—always remembering

that we use it, not as we now most commonly do, in its *particular* sense, having a particular reference to that *particular* portion of unorganized matter which we call a rock—and signifying an erect position of the body like the uplifted and erect position of a rock—but, as our forefathers used it, in its *general* sense, and having a *general* reference to all sorts of things not having life. We will not use it to denote the occupation of space after the particular manner of a rock merely, but after the manner of rocks, stocks, and stones, and all such lifeless things. And you will find that these two verbs, *to stand* and *to house*, used in exactly the sense to which I have here referred, are capable, in every possible instance, of supplying the places of the verbs *to exist* and *to be*. You will find that I can ask the same questions and state the same propositions, by means of a rock and a house which you can by means of the words *exists* and *is*. And in doing this, you will soon discover what it is which has so mystified mankind in all their metaphysical discussions.

It will not do to say that the meanings I have here asserted to belong to the words *stand* and *be* are arbitrarily attached to them by me. The meaning of these words, and the meaning of all words, do not depend upon *my will*, nor upon the will of *any man*—they are inherent in the words—that is, they stick to the words—that is, the *meaning* is associated in the mind with the *word*—and words will *mean* what they *mean* in *spite* of us—we cannot *help* ourselves—for the meanings of words depend upon the *experience of our senses*. When men discover a thing for the first time they give it a name, and thenceforward that name and that thing become *associated* in the minds of those men—linked—joined—the name and the thing cohere—stick together—and whenever those men hear that name pronounced, its *meaning*, that is to say, the thing which it names—the thing to which it points—to which it refers—*will* come into the mind—*will* be remembered—whether those men like it or not.

If I utter the words *live fish* in your hearing, and so as to excite your attention, there will come into your mind, in spite of you, that thing which is associated in your mind with that name, and also those circumstances with which it is also asso-



ciated, and you will be compelled to remember, not only a fish simply, but a fish struggling on the bank or in the net, or swimming in the water. And if I utter the word *swim*, you cannot help remembering something which you have seen moving in or upon the water. It is not a matter of option what the word *swim* shall cause you to remember. It *will* mean what it does mean—it will cause you to remember what it does cause you to remember—because the memory has already caused the word and its meaning to become associated—linked together—and you cannot have the one without the other.

But if, from lapse of time, or otherwise, that association should be destroyed—should its links be broken—should the cohesion between the word and thing be sundered, so that when the word is pronounced it has no meaning *sticking to it*, and causes nothing to be remembered—or if it be associated in one man's mind with one thing, and in another man's mind with another thing—so that when the word is pronounced it causes one man to remember one object, and another man another object—then, I say, it is perfectly self-manifest that that word has lost its power of fulfilling the office of words, and is, in fact, no longer anything but an insignificant sound, and a bone of contention among insignificant disputants—that is, disputants about words.

## B.

But it is perfectly certain there is not one man in a hundred thousand who knows the meaning of the word *to be*, and yet all men use it, and, in the common concerns of life, understand one another perfectly.

## A.

Every man *knows* what he himself *means* when he speaks—but the difficulty lies here—he does not know how to *tell* what he means—because the association between the meaning which is *in him*, and the words which were invented to express that meaning, has been, by time, destroyed and lost. Thus when you ask me, “what is sensation?” there is a meaning in you—that is to say, there is in you a *want* which you *mean*, that is, which you desire, to have satisfied. And you try to clothe this want which is in you—you try to express your meaning—in

words. But the words which you use are not associated in men's minds with any particular meaning of any kind—either in your mind or the mind of your hearers—how then can they render *common* to you and to others who hear you, the meaning which is in you. In order to do this, the words must be associated in the minds of both hearer and speaker with one and the same meaning. Thus it happens that, even in common conversation, we do, by our questions, *ask* for one species of knowledge, while, in fact, we *desire* quite another. It is this asking for one thing, while what we really want is quite another, which has so puzzled metaphysical reasoners. But I despair of making this clear to you otherwise than by illustrations.

B.

I think I have hit upon a mode of making you understand what sort of knowledge I desire with respect to sensation, when I say: "what is sensation?"

A.

Say on.

B.

The other day I picked off the floor a very small scrap of printed paper, which I suppose to have been torn from the leaf of some novel. The only words which were left upon it were these: "having laid aside his yataghan, he then proceeded to"—now I want to know what a yataghan is. It must be something material because its possessor is said to have "laid it aside." But I have looked into two or three dictionaries in vain. Now whatever my meaning may be, and whether I know what it is myself or not, when I say, "what is sensation?" I desire the same information with regard to sensation, as I do with regard to a yataghan, when I ask, "what is a yataghan?"

A.

I will prove, to your own entire satisfaction, that you desire no such thing. You say, you desire to know what is a yataghan; to which I reply that it is a kind of *xiphos*. Is your desire satisfied?

B.

No—because I do not know what a *xiphos* is. What is a *xiphos*?

A.

I pray you to mark your own words : "*because*," say you, "I do not know what a xiphos is." Now, then, I tell you that a xiphos is a kind of *ensis*. Is your desire yet satisfied?

B.

No—because I do not know what an *ensis* is. What is an *ensis*?

A.

An *ensis*, like a xiphos, is a kind of yataghan. Are you yet satisfied?

B.

Of course not.

A.

Now then I will satisfy you. A yataghan is a kind of *sword*. Now are you satisfied?

B.

Perfectly. I now know what a yataghan is.

A.

No, you don't. You only know what a yataghan is *like*—namely, an English sword. I say you do not know what a yataghan is. For, if a xiphos (a Greek sword) and an *ensis* (a Roman sword) and a yataghan (a Turkish sword) together with Dutch swords, English swords, cavalry swords, and dress swords, were all piled together on that table, you could not pick out the yataghan, and say, "this is the yataghan."

Now, in answering your question, what did I do? I only rang the changes upon several *words*, until, at last, I hit upon one which was associated in your mind with a meaning, that is, a thing, which is—not a yataghan—but something *like unto* a yataghan. And as soon as I had hit upon this word, you were perfectly satisfied. Your inquiry was after a *word*—not after the *meaning* of a word. All you wanted was the *name* of something which you could remember, and which thing should be *like* that other thing which is denoted by the word yataghan. Your inquiry was after the name of a likeness—name of something *similar to* a yataghan. You wanted a word, and I gave you a word, and you were satisfied. You were not satisfied with the words which I gave you first. And why? You have



yourself answered the question : "because I do not know what a xiphos or an ensis is," said you. No—because those words were not associated in your mind with any remembered thing. But as soon as I mentioned the word sword, which is associated in your memory with something which you have seen, and told you that a yataghan is a kind of sword—that is, of kin to a sword—that is, like a sword—then you were satisfied. And this, I say, proves beyond question, that what you wanted was a word which should be the name of something which you had known and remembered, and which remembered thing should also be of kin to—that is, like—the unknown thing after which you were asking. And this is always what we mean in all our ordinary questions. What is a gazelle? it is a kind of deer. What is a stool? it is a kind of chair without a back. What is an omnibus? it is a kind of coach, &c. &c. That is, a thing *like* a deer—a thing *like* a chair—a thing *like* a coach. And this too is what your slovenly talkers and questioners mean when they ask you what is the meaning of a word. They do not want a *meaning*—all they want is *another word*—*another word* which shall be associated in their minds with some *thing*, which *thing* is like the *thing* spoken of.

And this is all the answer which *language* can give—this is all the answer which can be given in words to *any* question. Words can only *tell* words. They cannot *tell* meanings. Words cannot *tell* things.

But we have not yet quite done with the yataghan. Suppose when I have told you that yataghan is a Turkish instrument of war, like that which we denominate a sword, you reply to me that you did not want to know what a yataghan is *like*, but what a yataghan *is*. This is but reiterating the same question. For the words, "what is a yataghan?" will mean "what is a yataghan like," in spite of you—that is, if they mean anything at all. The meaning which is in you—the desire which you want to have satisfied, it is true, is now different. But you are endeavouring to express this *altered* want by the *same* form of words, only laying a little more stress on the word *is*. You are now wanting one thing, and asking for another. At first, you only wanted your bank-note of a foreign country to be converted

into a bank-note of your own country. But, now, what you desire is, to have it converted into gold. That is, you desire things to be substituted for words. You are now no longer inquiring after words—after the names of similar things, but after the thing itself. You do not now want words, but the meanings of words. But it is quite clear that words cannot give you what you want. And it is the not understanding when we want words and when we want things, which has largely contributed to those endless disputes about matter, sensation, mind, time, death, right, being, essence, substance, entity, &c. &c. When a man said, “what is matter?” his hearer supposed he meant the same thing as though he had said, “what is an omnibus?” that is, the *name of some other thing* like matter; and he tried to answer him accordingly—that is, by giving him names—other words meaning the same or a similar thing. And it is no wonder he could not satisfy either himself or the questioner, or the world; for matter has no similitude—no likeness—and therefore it was impossible to *tell* him the name of anything like it. But the question does not mean, in this instance, as he does when he says, “what is an omnibus?”—he does not now mean, “what is matter like?” But he wants to know—not what matter *is*, but—matter itself. He wants now to know *things*—not to know the *names* of things. He now wants to know what *no words* can make him know. For, as I have said before, words can only make us know words—they cannot make us know things. The questioner wants an egg, and he who pretends to answer him, only offers him a stone. No wonder he is dissatisfied. But yet the one offers what he supposes the other asks for—and the other not knowing where the error lies—and not knowing how to frame his question so as to make the other understand what it is he really does want—it is surely no wonder that both should be mystified. And neither of them having the slightest idea that the whole mystery is merely a kind of verbal legerdemain—a trick of words—a verbal puzzle—easily enough understood when explained—it is no longer any wonder that they should both suppose that mystery to be a mystery of nature, which is, in fact, only a mystery of words.

But to return—you say you do not want to know what a yataghan is *like*, but what a yataghan *is*.

B.

Yes—we will suppose so.

A.

Then open that drawer, and you will know it—because you will see it. And I trust also you will henceforth know the difference between knowing a word, and knowing a thing—and likewise you will henceforth understand when you are inquiring after a thing, and when after the *name* of a thing. When you have seen that yataghan, you will then not only know the *name* yataghan, and the name of a thing resembling a yataghan, viz., a sword, but also the *thing* yataghan—not only the word, but the *meaning* of the word.

If I say to you, “what is a teaspoon?” you would reply, “it is *that* little silver instrument wherewith we stir our tea.” But to this I should answer: “I did not ask you what are the *purposes* of a teaspoon, but what is a *teaspoon*?” When you say a teaspoon is a “little silver instrument,” you are only calling a teaspoon by another name. But I do not want a name, but the *meaning* of a name. I therefore repeat, “what is a teaspoon?” Being thus pushed, all you can say is, that “a teaspoon is *that* which we call a teaspoon.” But to this I reply: “I knew that before.” The teaspoon was first represented by the *word* teaspoon—then it was represented by the words “silver instrument”—and now it is represented by the word *that*. But all these different names are only so many little napkins in which what I want to know is wrapped up. I do not want the napkin—I want that which is concealed *in* the napkin. You say, “a teaspoon is *that*”—but what is *that*? *That* is only a word. But what does that word represent? To what does it point? To what does the word *that* refer? For whatever it is, that is what I want to know.

B.

The word *that* refers to *thing*. And means *that thing*.

A.

Thing! But thing is only another word! another napkin!



But to what does this word thing refer? What does this new napkin contain? For that is what I want to know.

B.

The word thing refers to teaspoon—that thing (whatever it is) which we call a teaspoon.

A.

To be sure it does! And the *thing* teaspoon, and not any word or name, is what I want *to know*. Do you not perceive that what I crave *to know*, in this instance, is, not the *name* of a teaspoon, nor the *name* of anything which is of *kin to*, or *like* a teaspoon, but a *teaspoon itself*—that is, the *thing called* teaspoon—not the *calling*—but the *thing* called! You cannot, therefore, *tell* me what a teaspoon is—you can only *show* me. For you cannot *tell* me a *thing*. You can only *tell* me the *name* of a thing—which, in this instance, is *not* what I want to know.

I shall now show you how much mystery and confusion have arisen solely from the words *is* and *exists* having lost their signification—from their being no longer associated in our minds with things. And that had their meaning been preserved—had the cohesion between themselves and the things which they represent not been broken—much of this confusion would have been avoided. And further I shall show you that by re-associating in our minds these and other words with the *things* which they indicate, we shall find no difficulty whatever in unravelling all the mystery of metaphysics; and shall be as able to answer all metaphysical questions quite as satisfactorily as we can any other ordinary question whatsoever. And this is what Horne Tooke promised to do. “If we shall have a tolerably lengthened twilight,” said he, “we may still perhaps find time enough for a farther conversation on the subject: and finally (if the times will bear it) to apply this system of language to all the different systems of metaphysical (that is, verbal) imposture.”

*To stand*, you remember, signifies to do what stocks, rocks, and stones do—that is, to occupy a place in the universe merely—that is, not after the manner of living things which move hither and thither—but, at rest, after the manner of stocks and stones.

You will also recollect that whenever we use the word *stand*

we always preface the question by the word *how*, and not by the word *what*. Thus we say, "*how* do you *stand* affected by the late great bunkruptcy?" "But *how* does the case really stand?" "*How* stands the question?"

Now if we had never ceased to use the word *stand*—or if, when we substituted the word *exist* in its place, we had still remembered that both words mean the same thing, viz.; to occupy space after the manner of stones—in that case we should still have prefaced our questions by the word *how*. And instead of saying, "what is a yataghan?" and meaning, "by what other name is it called?"—or, "what is the name of some other thing known to me and resembling a yataghan?"—we should have still said, "how stands a yataghan?" and the word *how* being constantly used by all men in relation to manner, and the word *stand* being associated in the minds of all men with the idea of a rock, all men could not fail to perceive that the question really would mean: "after the manner of what rock, or stock, or stone, or other inorganic substance, does a yataghan do what the rock does—that is, occupy space?" And the questioner himself clearly understanding the meaning of the words he used would never think of asking this question with reference to sensation. Nor with reference to matter; for since matter is a general term, signifying all the stocks and stones, and inorganic as well as organic substances in the world, it is self-evident that to ask this question with reference to matter would be absurd. Again, to say: "what stands mind?" assumes, not only that mind does stand in the universe after the manner of a rock, but also that there are other things standing in the universe with which mind can be compared. But as no man suppose this, so no man would ever ask this question with regard to mind. So, when men ask, "what is mind?" they also assume that mind *is*. And men do not see the impropriety of this assumption, because the word *is* is associated in their minds with no meaning, and therefore may be understood by the hearer to mean anything or nothing, just as he pleases. If he understand it in the sense of the verb *to name*, he will endeavour to answer the question by ringing the changes on all the various names by which mind is expressed, which process he will and can only conclude by saying

after all: "mind is *that* which we call mind." But all this trouble would have been spared him if the word *stand* had been used instead of the word *is*: and he would have answered at once, "mind does not stand at all—nor occupy space at all." If a man say, "what is a yataghan?" his question is fully answered, if I reply, "it is a sword." Because the word *is*, both in the question and answer does duty for the verb to call or to name. And if he repeat the question, and say, "what is a sword?" his question is again fully answered, if I reply, "a yataghan." Because these questions only inquire after names. But though his question is answered, the man himself is not answered. Because although he does by his question inquire after names only, yet what he really wants are things, though he knows not how to express himself. He does not now want to know "what a yataghan *is*;" but he wants to know a yataghan. He now wants to be *informed* of a yataghan—that is, to have put into him the *form* of a yataghan.—But words cannot do this—nothing can do this but a yataghan. Words may recall the memory of some form *like* the form of a yataghan; but if you have never seen a yataghan, nothing can put its form into you but your own eyes and a yataghan.

I trust I have not laboured this point until I have made it more obscure than it was before. Although I fear it will still be more or less obscure until the nature of such words as sensation, mind, substance, essence, &c., together with the true office which they serve in speech, be explained to you.

### B.

I think I understand you nevertheless. You mean to say that when we use the words, "what is so and so?" the meaning which is *in us* (though we know it not) is a desire to know either another name for the same thing, or the name of some other thing which is like that after which we inquire. And that when the desired name is given (if there be one), and we still repeat the question, "what is?" the meaning which is *then in us* has changed, and we are desiring a species of information through the medium of words which we can only obtain by the intervention of things, and from the revelation of our senses. And that confusion has arisen with regard to these questions and their



proper answers, because the meaning which is *in us* is not the meaning which is *in the words* by which we seek to communicate that meaning. So that, in fact, we neither understand ourselves, nor can be understood by others. And thus it happens that we are perpetually inquiring after words when we want things—and when we want things our hearers suppose we only want words. And further, that we often persist in inquiring after a thing, where there is no thing to be had, and he who answers us, (supposing we want words), having no thing to give us, still persists in offering us words, *instead* of things. And thus both parties are mystified. And you say that this could not have happened had the words *stand* and *be* continued in use in their legitimate sense; and you seem to think that, in that case, men would have been driven earlier to inquire into the true office of words.

A.

I think so. For when they found that they could not say, “what stands or what houses sensation?”—when they found that they could not say of sensation that it has any existence—when they found themselves obliged to confess that it has *no* existence in the universe—that it has neither *standing* nor house—I think they would have been led to consider what purpose of speech such words answer. I think they would have been compelled to say to themselves: “if sensation have no existence, what do I mean when I use the word sensation in this or that particular sentence?” And thus I think they would have detected the fallacy which has so long puzzled mankind.

B.

You have said that you can ask any question by means of the words *stand* and *house* as well as I can by means of the word *is*, and that questions so asked will be always intelligible; or that, if the question be absurd, its absurdity will appear upon the face of it.

A.

Yes—I do.

B.

Can you say, “what stands or what houses the meaning of a

word?" instead of saying, "what is the meaning of a word?"

A.

Yes, indeed can I. And if the question had always been asked by means of these words, words and the *meanings* of words would never have been, I think, confounded together.

B.

Tell me, then, "what houses the meaning of the word yataghan."

A.

It does not *house* at all—because it does not occupy a place in the universe after the manner of those things which have houses.

B.

How or what *stands* the meaning of the word yataghan, then?

A.

It stands—that is, does what the rock does—that is, occupies a place in that part of the universe called Turkey, after the manner in which a sword occupies a place in that part of the universe called England.

"What or how houses the meaning of the word lion?" "The meaning of the word lion houses after the manner of tigers and leopards and other eastern beasts of prey." For the meanings of the words lion and yataghan, are the lion and the yataghan themselves. But if I say, "how houses or stands the meaning of the word sensation?" every one sees the absurdity of the question instantly.

B.

Oh! but this manner of speaking would never do at all. Suppose a foreigner were to ask me the meaning of the word lion, and I were to say, "the meaning of the word lion houses after the manner of tigers and leopards and other eastern beasts of prey"—how much would he be the wiser?

A.

Not at all—and what can prove more forcibly than this that his question only related to names? The foreigner would suppose that he already knew the thing lion, but that it was associated in his mind with some other name—and all he would

want would be to hear that name mentioned which had the power to cause him to remember the thing. All he wants, therefore, is the verbal meaning of the word lion. He wants to have a translation of the word—he wants to have another word substituted for the word lion—because he supposes that he already knows the thing lion. But suppose he did *not* know the thing lion—suppose there were indeed in the universe no such thing as lion—how much wiser would he *then* be for having the changes rung upon the name lion? If he were told that there was no such thing as lion, he would then naturally inquire how the word came to be admitted into the language, and what was its use. And had such a question been asked with regard to such words as sensation, it had probably been answered long before now. But all mankind acknowledge that they know not what mind is, or what sensation is. Yet they run up and down the market-place inquiring of each other, “what is mind?” And one man calls it by one name and another by another. My Lord Brougham calls it, “something which does something.” They are supposed to inquire after names, and they get names, but still are not satisfied. No—because here, unlike the foreigner, they want the thing. But the thing is nowhere to be found. And the first question should be, “is there such a thing as mind?”

B.

What is meant when I say, “what *is* the meaning of the word sensation?”

A.

It is quite evident that your meaning is, what does the word sensation *signify*?” To which I reply, it is the sign of the following words: “*that* which one feels.” And if you ask me to what the word *that* refers, I rap your knuckles with this ruler, and you are answered.

The fact is, every word has two meanings—a *verbal* meaning, and a meaning in nature. The *verbal* meaning is merely some other word or words signifying the same thing; or some other thing resembling it.

The meaning in nature is some thing or things capable of affecting us through the medium of the senses.



The *verbal* meaning may be *told*. The meaning in nature must always be a *revelation of our senses*.

If the verbal meaning does not direct us to the meaning in nature, then the verbal meaning is manifestly nothing more than a vox et præterea nihil—a mere idle and unmeaning noise.

What is flint? A flint is that mass of matter which chemists call silica, and which we call flint. But this is only the verbal meaning of the word flint; and which, were there no meaning in nature—that is, were there no such thing as a flint—would be mere empty noise signifying nothing. But if you want to know what I mean by *that* mass of matter, &c. &c.—if you require to know the meaning of the word *that*—I refer you to your sense of seeing and feeling for your answer. For you are now inquiring after the meaning in nature, which inquiry nothing can answer but a revelation of your own senses. In like manner you ask me, “what is sensation?” I reply, “the verbal meaning is, *that* which one feels.” If you inquire after the meaning in nature—after the meaning which is wrapped up in the napkin *that*—I then rap your knuckles with the ruler, and tell you again that it is *that* which you felt—and if you now ask me for the meaning of the word *that*—if you ask me what that is which you felt—I answer: “the ruler.”

I have already given you the *verbal* meaning of the word *mind*. Its verbal meaning is: “*that* which is remembered.” But a word with only a verbal meaning is but an idle breath. What then is the meaning in nature of the word *mind*?

B.

Ay—that’s coming to the point. When you say *mind* signifies “*that* which is remembered,” what is the thing which is concealed in the napkin *that*?

A.

But *mind*, you know, is a general term, and does not signify any one particular remembered thing, but all the things which men can remember. I cannot therefore tell you to what the word *that* refers unless you tell me the name of the thing which you remember. Suppose you were to say to me: “I have been to see a magnificent sight to-day”—and were then to ask me the meaning in nature of that word *sight*, I could

not tell you. But if you inform me what you have been to see—if you have been to see a cathedral—then the meaning in nature of that word sight, in that particular sentence, is a cathedral. While you were looking at it, it was a cathedral *seen*—after you had left it, it was a cathedral *remembered*. And a cathedral remembered forms part of your *mind*. The word mind, therefore, may sometimes signify a cathedral.

When I am looking at that lamp, that lamp is what we call a sight. But I am not one thing, and the lamp one thing, and the sight a *third* thing! No. If, while looking at that lamp, I say, I see a sight—the word sight signifies a lamp. But what lamp? not the lamp which stands on your table at home—nor any other lamp, but the lamp which I see. But it signifies “something more” than simply a lamp—it defines the particular relation existing between me and the lamp—it defines the particular effect produced on my organs by it—it defines the particular sense by which that lamp reveals itself to me. It signifies a lamp—but not only a lamp, but a lamp which I see. For the word sight signifies that (something, anything,) which is seen. In this instance that which is seen is a lamp. Here, therefore, the word sight signifies a lamp—which is seen.

But when it has been removed from the room, then it is no longer a sight, but a remembrance—that is, a thing which I *myn*—that is, which I remember. It is now a remembered thing—a myned, or myn’d, or min’d thing. But what thing is that which is myned, or min’d, by me? A lamp. Here, then, the word min’d signifies a lamp. But not a lamp merely—but a lamp which I *myn*, or which is myned, or myn’d or mind by me. The word mind defines the relation between me and the lamp. It tells you that the lamp to which it alludes is a lamp which I *have* seen, but which I see no longer, but only remember.

The word sight signified a *seen* lamp—the word mind signifies here a lamp *unseen*, but *remembered*. But they both (sight and mind) signify a lamp.

Now here is a third lamp which I hold in my hand. There are now three lamps. The one in my hand is a felt lamp—that before me is a seen lamp—that in the other room is a myned, myn’d,

or mind, that is, remembered, lamp. The one is a *feeling* or sensation—the other is a sight—the third is a mind. That is to say, the one is a something felt, the other is a something seen, the third is a something myned, myn'd, mind, or remembered. But what is this something? A lamp. Feeling, sight, and mind, therefore, in this instance, all signify a lamp. But each word defines (over and above) the particular sense by which each lamp manifests itself to me. But they all signify a lamp.

Now, suppose there were nothing in the world but lamps. Then those lamps might very properly be called my sight, my spectacle, or my exhibition—that is, the things seen by me, or exhibiting themselves to me. Now, suppose I am suddenly stricken blind, then all these lamps constitute my mind—that is, my myned or my remembered things—in a word, my mind. Suppose, for a moment, that there is nothing in the universe which I have not seen, felt, heard, tasted, or smelled. Then all the world is my mind.

Suppose I had but one sense, viz., the sense of seeing. And suppose this one sense of seeing was so constituted that I could see nothing but the sun. Then, I say, the sun, when my eyes were shut, would be my mind—that is to say, my remembered thing.

Here are two legs of lamb—one is a leg of lamb *roasted*—the other is a leg of lamb *boiled*—but they are both legs of lamb *seen*. But to-morrow they will not be legs of lamb seen, but legs of lamb myned, myn'd, *mind*, or *remembered*.

B.

Mind, therefore, in fact, signifies matter.

A.

Certainly it does—but not all matter—but only such portions of matter as have been seen, felt, heard, tasted, or smelled, and which have *not been forgotten*. Mind is, in a word, unforgotten matter—that is myn'd or remembered matter. As the word sight defines the particular relation between us and the thing (that portion of matter) spoken of, so the word mind defines the relation between us and the thing (that portion of matter) spoken of. The one informs us that the thing is a thing seen—the other a thing remembered. The word *gift* is a similar word.



The word *gift* means a thing given. It means a thing—but what thing we cannot tell until we hear its name. But we *do* know, by means of this word *gift*, what is the relation which exists between that thing, let it be what it may, and the person spoken of as its receiver, and the person spoken of as the giver. We know that it has passed from the one to the other—that it has changed hands as we sometimes say.

When the word *myned* had lost, by contraction, its participial termination *ed*, and had become first *myn'd* and then *mynd*, and finally *mind*, it then became a collective noun, like the noun *multitude*, and was soon erected into a verb by the addition of the word *to*. And having thus become a verb, it was treated like any other verb, and had, of course, its participles like other verbs. Thus, where our forefathers said *myned*, we now say *minded*—and where our forefathers said *blined*, we now say *blinded*. But *blind* and *blinded*—*mind* and *minded*—are only different forms of the same words, and mean the same thing. *Mind*, therefore, is *minded*—that is, remembered. But *minded* what? Remembered what? Answer: any kind, some kind, of matter—not forgotten matter—nor seen matter—nor felt matter—but *minded* or remembered matter.

If you ask, therefore, what is *my* mind, I draw upon paper all the objects which I can remember to have seen, heard, felt, tasted, smelled—and showing it to you, I say, “that is an exact representation of my mind.”

When the word *mind* had lost its participial character, and became used as a noun, that is, a name—all names having been declared by the learned to be the signs of ideas—men naturally enough supposed that this word *mind* (and others in the like predicament) must therefore be the sign of an idea. And then people began to talk of the idea of *mind*—idea of *power*—idea of *substance*, &c. But these ideas, answering to these names, could *nowhere be found*. No matter—they must be somewhere—and why must they be somewhere?—only because some one had said (I believe it was Aristotle who first said it—one of the Spectator’s ancient philosophers) that words are the signs of ideas. So, not being able to find these ideas, but still firmly believing they must exist somewhere, and by way of distinguish-

ing these ideas which could not be found from those other everyday sort of ideas which *could* be found whenever they were wanted, they proceeded to call those ideas which could nowhere be found—what think you? what think you they called them? Why, *abstract* ideas—that is, ideas which have been taken away—abstracted—stolen—lost—gone—in plain English, *no-ideas*.

When the scholiast asked his pupil of what idea *power* was the sign, the pupil looked about him in order to discover it. But not being able to find it, he declared the fact—"non est inventa," said he—and, "therefore, the idea of power is a lost, stolen, or strayed, or in other words, *abstracted* idea—and the word power is the sign of an *abstract* idea"—that is, of an idea nowhere to be found. And the pedagogue thereupon patted his pupil on the head, called him a good boy, and declared to his friends that he had made wonderful progress in learning.

Doth it not seem inconceivable that reasoning men should have been satisfied with this absurd phrase, "abstract idea," as an explanation of the meaning of the word power; and that these two senseless words should have been able to set men quarrelling like tigers—no, not like tigers—for there is no animal but man foolish enough to quarrel about *nothing*—which is the true rendering of the words "abstract ideas"—but like madmen.

The reason however is plain enough. Had they asked themselves what was signified by the word abstract, they would have discovered that they were only using a Latin word which, *when translated into that which it stands for in English*, signifies *something taken away*—and is wholly incapable of signifying anything else.

People sometimes say, when pressed to tell the meaning of their words, "that they "know very well what they mean themselves, and that is sufficient." But that is not sufficient. For they might as well bark like a dog, or mew like a cat, or crow like a dunghill cock, unless the sounds which they utter not only have a meaning within the breasts of those who utter them, but are also capable of putting that meaning into the breasts of those who hear them.

I say had they asked themselves the meaning of the words they used, they would have found out that when they talked of abstract ideas, they were, in fact, only talking about *taken-away ideas*—the single difference being that they spoke in Latin and Greek instead of speaking in the English language. And it could not but have occurred to them that it can make no possible difference, as to the thing spoken of, whether it be spoken of in one language or another.

An abstract idea is a taken-away idea ; and a taken-away idea is an abstract idea. The words which are spoken are different, but the thing spoken of is the same, call it by what name you will.

Had they thus consulted themselves as to the meaning of the words they used, they could not have failed to see that a taken-away idea is, in fact and reality, no idea at all. It is a non-idea. For when the *thing signified* is taken away, it is quite manifest that the *sign* becomes the sign of nothing. When the idea, that is, the thing signified, is taken away, abstracted, or lost, surely nothing can be more self-evident than that the word, that is the sign, is no longer the sign of anything.

But besides this, when they talk of abstract, that is, taken-away ideas, they do not mean that these ideas once *really* existed, although now lost, abstracted, or taken away. But they mean that they are a sort of idea which never did exist otherwise than as they fancy they exist now—that is, not at all—or, in other words, after the manner of things which have been abstracted, taken away, or destroyed. In this sense, therefore, (which is undoubtedly the sense in which the phrase is used) a taken-away idea is, to all intents and purposes, exactly equivalent to a non-idea, if I may be allowed to coin a word which is as good, at all events, as the word non-resistance.

But to return. Having made the participle *myned*, *myn'd*, *mynd*, or (as at present spelled) *mind*, into a noun, that is, a name, they next proceeded to endow this name with the power of action, by adding to it the word *to*.

By these several processes of language (which we are performing almost every hour in the day, with regard to all sorts of words) the Anglo-Saxon word *mynan* became altered into



*to-myn*; and the past participle of *to-myn*, viz. *myned*, into, first a noun, viz. *mind*, and then a verb, viz. *to mind*. And the place of the old participle *myned* has been supplied by the new participle *minded*.

A similar trick has been played with the word *long*. *Long* is only the past participle of *lengian*, to stretch out. And because when we desire to possess a thing which is scarcely within our reach, we stretch ourselves out in order to get at it, as for instance, an apple on the bough, or a flower growing in a ditch, we have clapped the word *to* before the past participle *long*, and so manufactured the verb *to long*—which signifies figuratively to do what they do who stretch themselves out after a thing—viz. to desire to possess something.

And thus, out of the past participle of an Anglo-Saxon verb, we have made a modern verb which in reality signifies precisely the same thing as the Anglo-Saxon word from which it was derived. And having made a new verb, we have also, as a matter of course, made a new participle to it, according to the analogy observed in such verbal processes. Thus, as the modern verb *to long* is synonymous, in its literal sense, with the old verb *lengian*, so the modern past tense and past participle *longed* is synonymous with the old past participle *long*.

And thus also the modern verb *to mind* is synonymous with the Anglo-Saxon verb *mynan*, to remember. And the modern past participle *minded* is synonymous with the old past participle *myned*, *myn'd*, *mynd*, *mind*.

But through all these mutations in the *form of the word* its true meaning has still clung to it. Thus, in Scotland, *to mind* is constantly used in the sense of *to remember*. So it is in many parts of England, especially Cornwall.\*

\* I have just received the following letter, for which I am greatly obliged to the writer.

St. Columb, 4th May, 1841.

Sir,

In this neighbourhood the word *mind* is frequently used by the lower classes instead of the word *remember*; as, 'I can mind when Mr. So and So was born'; 'I can mind when he was buried.'—In fact the use of the word in this sense is *very common* in Cornwall.

To Mr. E. Johnson,  
Nelson Square, London.

W.

Indeed all men, not excepting my Lord Brougham himself, constantly use the word in this its only possible meaning. Does not my Lord Brougham sometimes say to his secretary: "*mind* you put me in *mind* that I do so and so?" And does he not then mean: "*remember* that you cause me to *remember*, or, put into my *memory*, that I do so and so?" Does he not mean: "there is a particular thing which is now to me a *remembered* thing. But should it become to me a forgotten thing, have the goodness to make it once more a *remembered* thing?"

Sometimes, however, we use the word in senses which are arbitrary. We say: "I have a great mind to do so and so"—meaning a strong inclination or desire. The sense of the word *mind* is here guessed at, because no other sense than that of inclination or desire would render the sentence intelligible.

Almost all our ordinary conversation is made up of mere hints and inuendos, at the meaning of which the hearers guess. Thus we can frequently guess at what a man is going to say before he has half finished the sentence.

We also use the word *memory* when the word *mind* would express our meaning as well—thus, unconsciously, making the two words synonymous, as, in truth they are. We engrave on tombstones the words, "in memory of." What do these words mean? They mean that that stone is intended to put the passers-by *in mind* of the departed—or to *re-mind* them of him—or, to put him again into their minds or memories—that he may not cease to be one of their pack of *myned*, *minded*, or *remembered* things—that he may not become a *forgotten* thing.

I have said that, having first made the participle *myned* into a name or noun, to denote the totality of remembered things, they then proceeded to endow it with action, by means of the little word *to*—thus making it into a verb. Then they argued thus: "Here is a verb which signifies to *do* something. But there can be nothing done without a doer. As the verb *to mind*, therefore, signifies to *do* something, the noun *mind* must be the name of the doer. Here is an operation called *minding*, *thinking*, *reasoning*, or *reflecting*—there must therefore be a somebody or something to perform that operation—that somebody or something we call *mind*."

This is the reasoning of my Lord Brougham. But if this reasoning be correct I can manufacture these "somebodies or somethings" by the dozen. If there must be an active agent, a separate being, an operating and performing somebody or something in order to perform these extraordinary operations, I say I can make them at pleasure. I can create these wonderful beings at will.

Here is a book. I put the word *to* before the word, and thus erect the noun into a verb. "Now," says my Lord Brougham, "here is a verb which signifies to *do* something—to perform that operation which we call *booking*—not any fraction of matter—(mind that) but an active, separate, *booking*, somebody or something—which somebody or something we call — what? Let my Lord Brougham answer the question.

Look here again. We have a verb *to resist*. To resist signifies to *do* something, viz. to perform that particular operation called resisting; *therefore* there must be "somebody or something" to perform this operation—that "somebody or something we call resistance.

Well—be it so—let us suppose that the word resistance does imply some active separate agent. But what in the world shall we do with the word non-resistance? which has become as common almost as the word resistance. This legerdemain—this trick of language—often makes even this word non-resistance an agent whose business is to perform operations. "I pursued my enemy with the full intention of destroying him. But when I had overtaken him, and found him at my mercy, his non-resistance *compelled* me to spare him. Had he resisted, I had certainly killed him."

Here is an operation performed—the operation of *compelling* me to spare—and this operation was performed by — what? Not that separate, active, performing agent, called resistance, but that *other* separate, active, performing agent, called non-resistance!

Here are two operations performed—"not by any fraction of matter"—but, in the one case, by that separate, doing, performing agent which we call resistance; and in the other, by that non-doing, non-performing agent, which we call non-resistance!



B.

But matter, you know, wholly independent of anything else, can perform the operation of resisting. And, therefore, in this instance, it is not necessary to suppose any other agent.

A.

But can matter also perform the other operation of non-resistance?

B.

No—certainly not.

A.

Here is a cat. No man dare deny that a cat can remember. No man who has seen the cat starting off for the hall-door the instant she hears the voice of the cat's-meat-man, dare or can deny that a cat can remember.

Here again is an operation performed—the operation of remembering. But since matter cannot perform the operation of remembering, there must be “somebody or something—not any fraction of matter”—to perform this operation *for* the cat. And “that somebody or something we call” *memory*.

For memory is surely as necessary to perform the operation of remembering, as mind is to perform the operation of thinking.

Here then we have another of these independent, separate, immaterial agents.

But a cat can reason as incontestably as Sir Isaac Newton could reason. A servant of mine filled an egg-cup about half full of milk, and placed it on the floor for the cat. She could not, however, get her muzzle far enough into the cup to reach the milk. She immediately raised one of her paws, dipped it into the milk, and then licked it off her paw, repeating the operation until the milk was exhausted, standing on the three legs the whole time. And the readiness, and orderliness, and gravity with which she did it were exceedingly amusing.

It is impossible to deny that all this was a process of reasoning as regular and consequential as any algebraical process whatever. But, says Lord Brougham: “matter cannot reason—therefore there must be a somebody or something to reason, infer, conclude, believe, not any fraction of matter—but a reasoning,

inferring, concluding, believing being—that somebody or something we call mind.” But whether matter can reason, infer, conclude, believe, or not, it is quite certain the cat that emptied the egg-cup by means of her paw could do all four—and therefore that there must have resided in that cat, according to Lord Brougham, a “separate being—not any fraction of matter”—but wholly independent of her material self and her “sensations”—in order to perform these operations for her. And this somebody or something we call, I suppose, cat’s-mind. Who does not see that all this is but a repetition of the jargon of the Spectator’s ancient philosophers about life—which they embodied and personified in the same manner as we have embodied and personified mind. Mutato nomine it is but a re-enactment of the old farce.

“I am going,” says the soldier, “to pipe-clay my gloves.” But matter cannot perform the operation of pipe-claying, nor any other operation whatever ; for matter is inert. There must therefore be another independent, separate, immaterial agent, especially made and provided for the sole purpose of pipe-claying gloves—an acting, performing, pipe-claying being.

At this rate every insect and every reptile, every flea and every earth-worm, spider, and gnat—nay, every one of those little animalcules which disport themselves by hundreds in a single drop of ditch-water, must also be, every one of them, attended by a separate, independent, performing being—not any fraction of matter—but wholly independent of matter and its sensations—which independent, performing being is necessary to perform all their actions for them ; because matter of itself can perform nothing.

If such words as resistance, blackness, whiteness, &c. be the signs of abstract ideas, then I can manufacture these abstract ideas by the score. I will perform the operation of making an abstract idea at once, in order to show you a sample of this species of manufacture. “The palm of a labouring man’s hand is extremely horny—and this *horniness* of hand must, I should think, &c.” The word *horniness* which I have here coined, and which is as good and intelligible a word as any in the English language, and whose formation is perfectly ana-

logous with the formation of other similar words, such as whiteness, weakness, emptiness, &c. is as incontestably the sign of an abstract idea as whiteness, or emptiness. But, until I coined it, there was no such word—and therefore no such abstract idea as that represented by it. By making the word, therefore, I have also made the abstract idea denoted by it. And those who in like manner made the words whiteness, weakness, emptiness, made also the abstract ideas represented by them. In order to make an abstract idea, all you have to do is to tack the word *ness* to the end of almost any adjective in the language—and the word beautifulness is just as good a word as beauty. At this rate, to make a new word is to make a new abstract idea. And so it is. For an abstract idea is a no-idea—and to make *new* words is certainly to make *new* no-ideas—that is—*no* new ideas.

But this is not all. For the method of reasoning of my Lord Brougham and others of his school, will make it absolutely necessary to provide an independent, separate, immaterial, performing being in order to perform the operations of growing and flowering for every plant, tree, shrub, weed and flower in the universe. For as matter cannot perform any operation whatever, it cannot of course perform the very complicated actions of growing, blooming, &c. &c. But as to grow long and to grow short are two very different operations, we must have one independent being to perform the operation of growing long, and another to perform the operation of growing short—and, I suppose, two others to perform the exceedingly different operations of growing rich and growing poor.

But if my Lord Brougham once admit that matter—wholly of itself—and altogether without the intervention of any second being whatever—can perform any operation whatever—say, for instance, the operation of remembering, or willing, or desiring—then there is clearly no longer any necessity to suppose a second and separate being in order to account for the operation of thinking. For if it can perform the operation of remembering, why not also the operation of thinking?

But neither is this all. For man is not only a thinking being—but he is also a looking being—a tasting, smelling,



hearing and feeling being. But as matter can neither look, hear, feel, taste, nor smell, every man must also be provided with five separate, independent, immaterial existences in order to perform, for man, the operations of looking, feeling, hearing, tasting, and smelling—not any fraction of matter—and wholly independent and separate from his sensations—but five looking, hearing, feeling, tasting, smelling beings—which five separate, independent beings we call —: they have not yet been christened.

Now let us inquire a little into the nature of some of these extraordinary operations.

They are all mere tricks of language.

We often say to a child: “take care you do not let that glass fall—if you do it *will break*.” But we do not mean that the operation of breaking will be performed *by* the glass, but *upon* the glass, by whatever object it falls against. We *say* that the glass will produce a certain effect, which effect we call fracture, —but we *mean* that this effect will be produced by some *other* body *upon* the glass. And it is precisely the same when we speak of the operations of the senses. It is not man, nor a man’s eye, that performs the operation of looking. All a man himself can do is to place himself in a convenient position for allowing any object to produce the necessary effect *upon his eyes*. He can open his eye-lids, and turn himself toward the object—and this is all. When he has so done, he can no more help seeing (as we call it) than he can help falling when that which supported him is struck from beneath him. The act of seeing is not performed *by* the eye, but *upon* the eye by the object seen. It is not the eye which produces any effect upon the object, but it is the object which produces an effect upon the eye. In the act of seeing, the eye is as absolutely passive as the lenses in a microscope. It is not, therefore, we who discover or reveal objects, but it is objects which discover or reveal *themselves* to us. The object is the agent, and the eye the patient; and what we call seeing is the effect produced upon the patient by that agent.

All this is, if possible, still more manifest in what is called the act of hearing. It is not we who perform the operation of

hearing. Hearing is not any act performed by the ear, or by the nerves of hearing, but it is the name which we give to that effect which is produced *upon* those nerves by the vibrations of the air.

So, again, it is not we who perform the operation of feeling. But feeling is the name which we give to those effects which are produced (chiefly) upon our skin, by objects brought into contact with it. Feeling is an effect produced *upon*, and not an operation performed by, the skin. The word feel is nothing but the old English word *fell*, which signified skin, and is still preserved in the word fell-monger.

To feel, therefore, is only to skin any object. That is, to place it in contact with the skin. And to bring the two into contact is all that we can do. When in contact, the object produces an effect upon the nerves of our skin. And as we give the name of fracture, in ordinary language, in order to distinguish that particular effect which has been produced when a thing has been broken, from other and different effects; so feeling is the name which we give to those various effects produced upon the nerves of the skin by external bodies. The skin of a healthy man in contact with nothing but the air, has a particular and definite mode of existence peculiar to itself. And it bears a particular and definite relation to all other matters in the universe. And the various heterogeneous parts whereof the skin is composed bear a definite and particular relation to each other. But when a body has been brought into contact with it, that particular and definite mode of existence is, for the time being, changed—and the former definite relation existing between its several component parts is altered. It existed before after the manner of skin in contact with air only. Now it exists after the manner of skin in contact with some other body. There is a something now which is doing something to the skin—altering its former relations, internal and external, and that alteration in its relations—in its mode of existing—we call feeling.

#### B.

But will this mode of reasoning account for the internal feelings?—hunger, thirst, &c. &c.

## A.

Perfectly. Man is not a mass of homogeneous, but of heterogeneous matter. And the heterogeneous parts, of which the whole is composed, are in constant motion; and the relations which each bears to each are perpetually changing; and the effects, therefore, which each produces upon each are unceasingly varying. Thus, when a man has fasted long, the relations between the internal and heterogeneous parts are no longer the same as they were before he had so fasted. And the effects produced by each upon each are no longer the same. And hunger is the name which we give to the new effects produced.

The conditions and internal relations according to which a full man exists, are not the same conditions and relations according to which a hungry man exists. And the new and altered conditions and relations are effects which have been produced upon his organs by the several processes called absorption, secretion, &c. And to this new condition of existence we give the name of hunger.

But I shall have occasion to recur to this when I come to the word *pain*.

Again: it is not we who perform the operation of tasting. All we can do toward it is to bring sapid bodies into contact with the tongue. That is, (as in the case of seeing) to put our organs into a convenient position for allowing sapid objects to produce their natural effects upon them. To change the ordinary and general relation between some body and ourselves, and to establish a new relation between them; so that a new effect may be produced *upon us*. To that new effect, produced by change of relation, we give the name of taste.

While the relation between us and a piece of sugar is that which we call distance, that piece of sugar produces upon us that single effect which we call seeing, provided that we have, by raising the eyelids and turning our face towards it, put the body into a convenient position to be affected by it after that particular manner.

But if we substitute that relation called contact for that other relation called distance, then this new relation enables the object to produce a new effect upon us.



This new effect we call feeling. If we change the relation once more, by putting it within the cavity of the mouth, we then enable that object to produce a third effect upon us.

This third effect we call taste.

It is the same with smelling. Smelling is not an operation performed by us, but by odoriferous bodies upon us. And we can have all these effects produced upon us without our consent.

The universe is made up of an infinite number of different combinations of matter—each existing after a manner peculiar to itself, and standing in a definite relation to all other existences. And to these various masses of matter we have given names general and particular. But these several masses of matter, including ourselves, are constantly producing effects one upon the other. The particular relation of each of them, to other things, is perpetually altered, and its manner of existing changed. And it was soon found necessary, not only to give names to things as they exist at any one given time, but also to give them different names to denote that their mode of existence had been changed, and new relations established. Thus mortar is but another name for lime, sand, and water—house, for mortar, bricks, wood, glass, iron, &c., existing according to a new set of relations. Thus the word glass is the name of a particular thing existing according to its ordinary and intended relations. But the words broken glass are the name of that same thing existing now according to a new set of relations. The relation which formerly existed between it and the stone which broke it, has been altered from that relation called distance, to that other relation called contact. And this new relation of contact has produced a new relation between the several parts composing the glass. These several parts which are now at a greater or less distance from each other were formerly in cohesive contact.

As, then, when a glass breaks, the operation of breaking is not an operation performed by the glass, but *upon* the glass by the object which strikes against it—as, when a man is said to see, feel, hear, taste, smell, the operations of seeing, feeling, hearing, tasting, and smelling, are not operations performed *by* him, but *upon* him—so when a man is said to think or think—

the operation of thinging or thinking is not an operation performed *by* him upon things, but by things *upon* him. And as we call the operation of objects upon the eye, *seeing*—upon the ear, *hearing*, &c.—so we call the operations of things *generally* upon our nervous system *generally*, and not through any one particular instrument or organ of sense, but through all of them collectively—so, I say, we call this operation of things upon us, thinging, or thinking. And if there had been one particular organ through the instrumentality of which this operation of thinging or thinking was performed, instead of its being performed through the instrumentality of all of them collectively, then we should have, or at least, might have called this operation of thinging or thinking, by the name of that organ, just as we now call the operation performed upon the eye, *eyeing*—upon the ear, (h)ear-ing—upon the palate, *palating*—upon the nose, *nosing*—upon the fell, (that is, the skin) *felling* or *feeling*.

B.

But what in the world do you mean by this word thinging? I never heard or saw the word before.

A.

Then have you read Horne Tooke with the open eye indeed, but the closed understanding, with which it has been his fate to be read by most men. You have, like my Lord Brougham, licked off the etymological scum from the surface of the clear deep waters of his philosophy, but of the waters themselves you have not tasted.

“Does the Latin *verus* also mean *trowed*?” says Horne Tooke’s colloquist. To this he replies: “It means nothing else. *Res*, a thing, gives us *reor*, that is, I am *thing-ed*: *ve-reor*, I am strongly *thinged*: for *ve*, in Latin composition, means *valde*, i. e. *valide*. And *verus*, that is, strongly impressed upon the mind, is the contracted participle of *vereor*. And hence the distinction between *vereri* and *metuere* in Latin. *Veretur* liber, *metuit* servus? Hence also *revereor*.” Here his colloquist exclaims: “*I am thinged*! Who ever used such language before? Why, this is worse than *reor*, which Quinctilian calls a *horrid* word. *Reor*, however, is a deponent, and means *I think*.”

“And do you imagine,” says Horne Tooke, in reply to this, “there ever was such a thing as a deponent verb, except for the purpose of translation, or of concealing our ignorance of the original meaning of the verb? The doctrine of deponents is not for men, but for children; who at the beginning must learn implicitly, and not be disturbed or bewildered with a reason for everything: which reason they would not understand, even if the teacher was always able to give it. You do not call *think* a deponent. And yet it is as much a deponent as *reor*. Remember, where we now say, I think, the antient expression was—*me thinketh*, i. e. *me thingeth*—*it thingeth me*.

“Where shall we sojourne till our coronation?

Where *it thinks* best unto your royall selfe.”

*Richard 3rd, p. 186.*

For observe, the terminating *k* or *g* is the only difference (and that little enough) between *think* and *thing*. Is not that circumstance worth some consideration here? Perhaps you will find that the common vulgar pronunciation of *nothink*, instead of nothing, is not so very absurd as our contrary fashion makes it appear.

Bishop Hooper so wrote it.

‘Mens yeyes be obedient unto the Creatour, that they may se *on think*,\* and yet not another.’—*A Declaracion of Christe, by Johan Hoper, cap. 8.*”

It is true, this is all Horne Tooke says of the word *think* or of the word *thing*. But is not this sufficient? Is not this fully enough to prove what he thought, not only of the word *think*, but also of the operation of *thinking*? Is it not quite clear that he believed the words *think* and *thing* to be one and the same word? “The terminating *k* or *g*,” says he, “is the only difference (and that little enough) between *think* and *thing*. Is not that circumstance worth some consideration here?”

And then he introduces a quotation from Bishop Hooper, in which the word *think* is actually used instead of the word *thing*. Instead of writing *one thing*, the Bishop writes “one think.”

The ridicule, too, with which he mentions the grammatical

\* That is, *one think*—that is, *one thing*.



doctrine of deponents is sufficient evidence that he perfectly understood the nature of those operations which are *said* to be expressed by deponent verbs. He saw clearly that those operations which are expressed by deponent Latin verbs, are operations performed not *by* the speaker, but *upon* the speaker. He knew that, in fact, they are what grammarians call passive verbs. And that their active signification was only gratuitously bestowed upon them by translators, in order to make the Latin idiom correspond with the English idiom. *Reor*, say the grammarians, is a deponent verb and means *I think*. There is not, and never was, any such thing, says Horne Tooke, as a deponent verb. • “The doctrine of deponents is not for men, but for children.”

And I suppose there is no one of the present day who will deny this assertion.

Since the nature of the Greek and Latin terminations is now so well understood, I do not see how it is possible to suppose that a verb with a passive form can have an active signification.

The truth is, these deponents are all passive verbs, and should be translated, “*I am*” *so and so*.

But, say the grammarians, we cannot translate *reor* in that manner—we cannot say, “*I am think-ed*.” To this, I reply, that that is only because we have forgotten that *think* and *thing* are one and the same word differently spelled. Had the words *think* and *thing* always been spelled alike—had the word been written either always *think* or always *thing*—it would then have always retained its meaning as the general name of all the various combinations of matter. And then we should have translated *reor*, “*I am think-ed or thing-ed*”—that is, “*I am affected or acted upon by some think or thing*”—just as we now say: “*I am poignarded*,” that is, “*affected or acted upon by a poignard*.” Or, “*I am wetted*,” that is, “*affected or acted upon by the wet*.”

But the *aurita arcadiæ pecora*—that is, the grammarians never dreaming that the word *think* is a noun, having the same sense and use as the word *thing*, and being indeed the same word differently spelled—and taking it for granted that the operation of thinking is an operation performed by us, like

walking, or fighting, or digging, or singing—in translating the Latin *passive* form *reor*, had nothing for it but to render it by the English *active* form, “I think.” And they sought to conceal this stupid absurdity, and to put a muzzle on the mouth of inquiry, and to save themselves from the fancied disgrace of confessing that they knew nothing at all about the matter, by saying that *reor* is a deponent verb—that is, a verb with a passive termination, but an active signification.

They might just as well have said that a negro is a “white man with a black skin.”

Had the grammarians made “nature the expositor of language instead of making language the expositor of nature,” they could not have fallen into this error. Had they studied things instead of words—had they consulted the book of nature for the meaning of the word *seeing*, instead of consulting the dictionary—when they looked at the sun, had they said to themselves, “I am now in the act of doing what is called *seeing the sun*—and yet I can certainly see nothing but light; for if I still continued to look in the same direction, if there were no light, my experience proves to me that I should see nothing. But the light comes from the sun to my eyes—the operation called seeing, therefore, whatever it be, must be performed by the light upon my eyes—or, if the expression be more approved, by the body which sends that light to my eyes.

It is not I who *see the sun*, but it is that *thing*, the sun, which *thingeth* me—me *thingeth*—me *thinketh*—me *thinks*—that is, me *striket*h—or, me *strikes*—or as we now say, *strikes* me. When a man says he is “sunning himself,” he does not mean that he is doing anything to the sun or to himself, but that the sun is doing something to him, videlicet shining upon him. All that he himself has done is, the placing himself in a convenient position to allow the sun to shine on him. He means and does the same thing when he says, I am looking at the sun. All that he himself does toward the act of looking, is the turning his face toward the sun and opening his eye-*lids*.

The eyes themselves he can neither open nor shut.

Had not a slovenly and varying pronunciation caused the word *thing*, when the language became a written language, to

be written sometimes *thing* and sometimes *think*, we should have still continued (in its proper place) to use the phrase, *I am thinged*, or *it thingeth me*—or *me thinks*—as our forefathers did—and, indeed, as we sometimes do even now—for the phrase *me thinks* is not yet quite obsolete.

For although custom, and grammatical associations, make the phrase *I am thinged* sound very harshly, yet I see nothing in the phrase *I am thinged* more uncouth than in the phrase *I am stoned*, or *I am booted*, or *I am sunned*, or (if I get upon the table) *I am tabled*, or, when the horse is in the stable, in the phrase, *the horse is stabled*. In all these phrases the verb or participle is made out of the noun or name mentioned. Out of the name stone is made the participle stoned. Out of the name boot is made the participle booted. Out of the name table is made the participle tabled. Out of the name stable is made the participle stabled. And why not out of the name thing make the participle thinged? For this is the way in which all verbs and participles whatever are made in our language. As the phrase, *I am stoned*, signifies that I am experiencing the effects of a *stone*, so the phrase, *I am thinged*, signifies that I am experiencing the effects of *things*. But what are the effects of things upon us? They are very various. They produce different effects upon different parts of the body. The rose produces one effect upon the eye, and a totally different effect upon the nose. For these particular effects we have particular names derived from the name of that part of the body on which the effect is produced. Thus the effect produced by vibrating air upon that living instrument called the ear, we call (h)earing—that is, earing.

But besides the immediate and transient effect produced upon the instrument, there is another and much more permanent effect produced upon the nervous tissue within the skull *beyond* the instrument. Besides the temporary picture drawn upon the retina of the eye, there is another and yet more permanent effect produced—the picture of a picture, if I may so speak. The former effect we call seeing—the second, remembering. And this is the case with all the five instruments of sense. This remembering is a *general* effect,



produced by *all things generally*, upon the nervous tissue *generally*. There is no *particular instrument* provided for obtaining this effect. Therefore it could not derive its name from any particular instrument. It derives it, *therefore*, from the *general name* of all the objects capable of producing this general effect, viz. the name or word *things*—and we call it thinking, i. e. thinging. But as seeing, hearing, feeling, &c., are not operations performed by the eyes, the ears, the skin, &c., upon visible, audible, or tangible objects, but by these objects upon those instruments—so thinging or thinking is not an operation performed by us upon things, but by things upon us.

The old form of expression puts this beyond doubt, I think, *methinks*, i. e. *methingeth*, *methings*—that is, something thingeth or things me—is precisely equivalent, both in sense and form of expression, to our very common phrase, “it strikes me”—or “something strikes me.” As, for instance, “*it strikes me* we shall have more rain to day”—“*something strikes me* that man is deceiving us.” Now for each of these phrases, “*it strikes me*,” or “something strikes me,” may be substituted the words “I think,” without the slightest apparent alteration in the sense—“I think we shall have more rain to day”—“I think that man is deceiving us.” But the word *something* is, in fact, two words, some and thing, and mean some *one* thing—I do not know what—but some one thing or other—“*strikes me*.” But to be struck by a *thing* is to be *thinged*, precisely as to be dried *by the air* is to be *aired*—as to be warmed *by the sun* is to be *sunned*—as to be mounted on a good horse is to be *well horsed*—as to be stabbed by a poignard is to be *poignarded*. And as, in all these expressions, it is indifferent whether we say dried by the air or *aired*—warmed by the sun or *sunned*—mounted on a horse or *horsed*—stabbed by a poignard or *poignarded*—so also it is indifferent whether we say struck by a *thing*, or *thinged*.

Now, then, as the two phrases, “I think,” and “something strikes me,” mean the same thing—and are mutually interchangeable and convertible terms—it is quite clear that when we say, “I think,” we mean what we mean when we say, “something strikes me”—and that whatever that operation be

which is performed when "*something strikes me*," that same operation is that which is performed when "*I think*"—since the two phrases, "*something strikes me*," and "*I think*," both signify the same thing.

But although no one has ever yet pretended to give us the slightest inkling of the nature of that mysterious operation called "*thinking*," when considered as an operation performed by that other mysterious, incomprehensible thing, called mind; yet that operation, when expressed by the equivalent phrase "*something strikes me*," becomes of itself perfectly simple and intelligible—and it also becomes quite manifest that the operation (which is equally indicated by both forms of expression, "*I think*" and "*something strikes me*") is an operation performed, not by us, but by things upon us—for if it be some *thing* which strikes *me*, the operation is clearly performed by the *thing*—I being the patient affected or operated upon.

It seems to me that he who shall still say that *thinking* is an operation performed by man, is necessarily bound to prove that the two phrases, "*I think*," and "*something strikes me*," cannot be used as equivalent terms.

We have many other phrases indicative of this same operation of *thinking*—all differing in words—but all agreeing in describing the operation as performed, not by us, but by something apart from us, and acting upon us. Thus we say: "*It runs in my head*" or "*in my mind*"—"it occurred to me"—"*it jumped into my head*"—"it never once came into my head," meaning, "*I never once thought of it*"—"it came all of a sudden into my mind"—"*the truth flashed upon me*"—"it seems to me"—"*it appears to me*." All these are undoubtedly only so many varieties of expression all referring to one and the same operation, viz. that operation which we sometimes express by the words, "*I think*"—sometimes by the words, "*it strikes me*"—and sometimes by the phrases above mentioned. They all simply mean that we are *affected by things*—or *thinged*.

If you ask me what is meant by the word *something* in the phrase "*something strikes me*," I answer: "*that depends upon circumstances*." If you go to the window and look abroad for a minute, and then, turning away, observe: "*something strikes*

me we shall have a wet day"—in that case the word something means a wet day. A wet day is the thing which things you—which strikes you—which "seems" to you—which "appears" to you—which "shows itself to you"—which "thinks you," or *of or concerning* which "you think." In a word, which "you remember."

You will observe here, if you please, that I cannot say "which thinks you," or "which *you think*"—because, although I can say, "a wet day thinks, i. e. things you," yet I can neither say, "you think a wet day," nor "you thing a wet day"—because the operation of thinking or thinging is not performed by you upon the wet day, but by the wet day upon you. If it were performed however by you, then I might say, "you think a wet day." But I cannot—and therefore I am obliged to introduce the prepositions "of" or "concerning." I will explain the reason of this presently. And its explanation will form a strong collateral proof that the operation of thinking or thinging is strictly analogous with the operations of seeing, feeling, hearing, &c., and is, in fact, to all the organs of sense collectively, what seeing, feeling, hearing, &c. are to the same organs individually.

If we resolve the following sentence: "It strikes me that we shall have a wet day" (which undoubtedly involves the operation of thinking), the resolution will stand thus; and will, I think, render intelligible what the nature of that operation really is.

#### RESOLUTION.

"A wet day—it strikes me—we shall have *that*."

Or since *it* and *that* have the same force—*it* signifying *said* and *that* signifying *assumed*—the resolution may stand thus:

A wet day—*that* strikes me—we shall have *that*.

That is—

"A wet day—*said* wet day strikes me—we shall have *assumed* wet day."

or,

"A wet day—*said* wet day *appears* or seems to me—we shall have *assumed* wet day."

or,

"A wet day—*said* wet day thingeth me or methingeth—we shall have *assumed* wet day."



or,

“A wet day—*it thinks* me—we shall have *assumed* wet day.”

“Where shall we sojourn?—wherever *it thinks* best unto your royal selfe.” That is to say: “in that place which place *strikes* or thingeth or thinks your royal selfe—or *appears* to your royal selfe—as the best place.” Surely it is quite plain that it is the place which thinks—which appears—which strikes—which performs the operation of *thinking*, or striking, or appearing—and not the king.

If you ask me to describe to you the nature of this operation or effect which is produced upon us by things, and which we call ‘thinging,’ or ‘thinking,’ or ‘striking,’ or ‘running in the head,’ or ‘jumping into the mind,’ or ‘occurring to us,’ or ‘remembering’—to this I reply, that I will describe it to you as soon as you have described to me the nature of those operations which we call hearing, feeling, seeing, tasting, smelling. These last are five “somethings done” to five different parts of the body. But the nature of each something which is done we cannot tell. And so neither can any man tell the nature of that effect of things upon us which we call remembering. But yet every man can tell the nature of the one quite as well as he can *tell* the nature of the others.

Why then has the one been considered so great a mystery, and the others not so? Because man has sought to find, in this mysterious operation, a characteristic more exclusively peculiar to himself—a broader boundary-line of distinction between himself and inferior animals—than his Creator has been pleased to award him—but which the pride of his heart, arising out of his superior knowledge and power, makes him anxious to discover.

Had there been a distinct set of visible organs for the faculty of remembering, or one distinct and visible organ for that purpose, as there is for seeing, hearing, &c., this mistake could not have occurred. For then it would have been observed that this remembering organ was possessed by other animals as well as by man.

A dog cannot *tell* the nature of a stone, but he *knows* the nature of a stone nevertheless. He knows that a stone is hard

as well as we do. He knows that a stone will hurt him, if it fall upon him, as well as we do. He does not know the *word* "hard," nor the *word* "hurt"—but he knows the *feeling* "hard," and the *feeling* "hurt"—which feeling is the same, whether it be named or unnamed. It is not the *word* "hard," nor the *word* "hurt," which constitutes any part of the nature of a stone.

And so a dog, in like manner, understands the nature of smelling and tasting as well as we. That is to say, he can smell and taste as well as we. The only difference is that he cannot give *names* to them.

The faculty of remembering (as we call it) is as distinct a sense, and has as just a title to be considered a sixth sense, as any one of the ordinary five. And it is a mistake to suppose that there are no organs of the memory. The eye is the organ of seeing, the ear of hearing, the skin of feeling, the nose of smelling, the tongue of tasting—and so the eye, the ear, the skin, the nose, the tongue, are the organs of remembering. They are the external instruments through the medium of which external objects are enabled to produce their necessary effects upon the living nervous tissue. While the eye is the organ of seeing, it is also the organ of remembering the things which have been seen. It is the organ through which visible objects cause themselves to be, not only seen, but remembered also.

One of the grand characteristics of nature is the achievement of manifold effects from few causes. In this instance, she obtains two results through one organ—that result which we call seeing, and that other result which we call remembering.

It is the same with all the other organs of the senses.

If it be true, as I have asserted, that the organs of the senses are also the organs of remembering, then, wherever there is an organ of sense, there also ought to reside the faculty of remembering. Four of the instruments of sense are situated in the head. But one—the *fell* or skin—is spread out over the whole surface of the body. The faculty of remembering, therefore, ought, in like manner, to be spread out over the whole body also. Accordingly we find that this is actually the case. When you remember a visible object, you say you can see it with

your mind's eye. You seem to *see* it over again. This memory resides in the nerves of the eye. When you remember a sound, you hear it with the mind's ear. You seem to hear it over again. This memory resides in the nerves of hearing. But if you receive a severe wound in any part of your body, no matter where, when you remember the pain, you will seem to feel it again in the part on which the wound was inflicted. And besides this, who can doubt that the memory which enables Moscheles to execute his rapid passages on the piano-forte resides in the fingers themselves? It is his fingers which remember where to find the proper keys, and not his brain. A weary and worn-out performer's fingers will still go on striking the proper keys, while executing some stale air, perhaps for the ten-thousandth time, when his brain is almost overwhelmed with sleep.

That the faculty of remembering is a distinct sixth sense is, I think, quite clear. For it is quite possible to conceive that we might possess in perfection all the five senses, without the faculty of remembering. But without the faculty of remembering the other five senses would be of little use. The proverb that a "burnt child dreads the fire," would not then be true. When a child had put its hand into the fire and burned itself once, it would do so again, if it could not remember the pain. Experience would then be entirely without use. We should walk into the water, and run our heads against posts, and set fire to our houses—in a word, life would not be worth half an hour's purchase.

Amongst the various modes of expression to which I have alluded, and which we daily use in order to denote that operation called thinking, there is one of which I have yet said but little, but which is the most important of all. It is this phrase—"something tells me." We say, "something tells me I shall not live long"—"something tells me that man is an impostor."

There is another very common mode of expression in which the verb *to say* is used. It occurs thus, and is exceedingly common among those who speak according to the rules of nature, and not according to rules of grammar; "as soon as I observed that the man hesitated and looked down, *said I to myself*, this



man is a cheat. The sense is the same whether the expression be, *said* I to myself, or *thought* I to myself.

I say this is important. For you will remember (as I told you in an early part of our conversation) that the word *thing* has a double sense and use. Its first and original signification is *speech*. In its secondary sense, it is merely a general name, and is used as we use the word *object*, or nearly so. It is the name of all the component parts whereof the sum of the universe is made up, and of the entire universe itself. When, therefore, this word *thing* is erected into a verb by placing *to* before it, that verb *to thing*, like the noun out of which it is formed, ought to have a double signification also. And the verb *to thing* ought to signify, not only to be “affected by things,” a meaning which it derives from the secondary sense of the noun *thing*; but it should also signify *to speech*, or, as we now spell it, to speak—a meaning which it should derive from the first and original sense of the word *thing*—viz. *speech*. And if, as I have asserted, the words *think* and *thing* are one and the same word, then our verb *to think* ought not only to signify to be “affected by things,” but also “to speak.” And as I have sought to prove that our verb “to think” does actually sometimes signify “to be affected by things,” by showing that the phrase “something strikes me,” is exactly equivalent with the phrase “I think,” and is used to denote exactly the same operation; which phrase “something strikes me,” it cannot be questioned, does denote that “I am affected by something”—so I ought also to be able now to prove that the verb *to think* does also actually sometimes signify to speak, by showing that we are also in the habit of using phrases which are exactly equivalent with the verb *to think*; and which are used to denote exactly the same operation as the words *to think*; and may be substituted in the place of the words *to think*, without, in any manner, altering the sense; and which phrases do, beyond any question, signify to speak, say, or tell.

The proof required I have already given you. It is contained in the very common phrases, “something tells me,” and, “said I to myself”—for we manifestly mean the same thing, and it is wholly indifferent to the sense, whether we say: “I thought we

should have rain to-day," which is our form of expression at one time—or "something *told* me it would rain to-day," which is our form of expression at another time. Or whether we say, as we sometimes do, "*thought* I to myself," or "*said* I to myself it will rain to-day."

This entire agreement in the double use of each of the two words think and thing—and not only in the double use, but also between the two senses of the two words reciprocally—is, I think, a strong confirmation of the truth of my assertion that think and thing are but one word. And when to this is added the fact that our noun *a thing*, was formerly sometimes written *a think*—not only by the Anglo-Saxons, but also by the early English writers—and the fact that our word *thing*, by those whose traditional pronunciation has not been corrupted by education, is still pronounced *think*, as in the word *somethink*, *nothink*—and the fact that the only difference between the two words, as regards the manner of spelling them, is a single letter, and that the final one, a circumstance not worth a moment's consideration when it is remembered that there is not perhaps a single word in the language which was not formerly spelled in a variety of ways—and when, in addition to all this, it is remarked how simple and rational and intelligible is the solution which this sense of the word think, taken in conjunction with the sense which I have restored to the word *mind*—when it is remarked I say, how simple, reasonable, and intelligible is the solution which is thus offered with regard to those unaccountable and incomprehensible mysteries which have hitherto been supposed to be represented by the words mind, thinking principle, operation of thinking, &c. &c., about which such a heap of unintelligible and contradictory fustian has been palmed upon mankind, and called philosophy—surely it is not too much to say that, at least, I have in my favour *strong probability*—and *strong probability*, arising from the facility with which it enabled him to *account* for all that was before *unaccountable* with regard to the planetary motions, is all the proof that can be advanced in favor of the universality of Newton's doctrine of gravitation.

You may have observed, perhaps, that when we desire to express the operations of seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, and

smelling, we are accustomed to do so by two distinct forms of speech. Thus we either say: "I look," or "it looks"—as: "I will look at it"—"it looks like rain."

"I hear," or "it sounds"—as: "I hear a noise"—"that noise sounds like thunder."

"I feel," or "it feels"—as: "it feels soft."

"I taste," or "it tastes"—"I smell," or "it smells."

But "there is nothing strictly arbitrary in language," says Horne Tooke; nor is this two-fold mode of expression with regard to the senses either arbitrary or accidental. There is a reason in nature for it. For, in the exercise of the senses, there are, in fact, often two operations performed—the one voluntary and the other involuntary—the one being an action performed by us, and the other by things upon us. And it was in order to enable us to distinguish these two actions that these two distinct forms of speech were invented; since *both* operations are not *necessarily* nor *always* performed.

It is the same with thinking. There are sometimes two distinct operations involved in that process—and it is to distinguish between these two actions that we have the two forms of speech, "I think," and "it thinks me—it strikes me—me-thinks," &c. And, it is because one of these processes is really performed by us, and because the two-fold nature of the process has not been observed, and because the two-fold, i. e. original as well as secondary meaning of the word *think* has been forgotten, that the two modes of expression have been confounded as being both indicative of one operation, and that that operation has been supposed to be performed by some exclusive mental power possessed by us, and denied to all other animals. Hitherto I have only mentioned one of the operations involved in the process of thinking. I shall now explain the nature of the other.

With regard to the exercise of the senses, I have already told you that all a man can himself do is to place his bodily organs in a possible and favourable position to be acted upon by things. Although the doing of this does not form any part of the actual operation of seeing, yet it is often absolutely necessary to the accomplishment of that process. Since you



cannot see a thing unless you will turn your face toward it and look at it—that is, bring the object in a line with the axis of your eye. And this is what you mean when you say: “I will look at it.” But when you have done this—when you have performed your part of the process—all that part of the process which depends on your will—if you still continue to talk, and have occasion to speak of the sense of sight in connexion with that object while it stands before you, you then use a different form of expression. You then say: “it looks,” or “it seems”—because then the operation of seeing no longer depends on your will, but is performed upon you, whether you will or not, so long as you keep the eye exposed to the object. You do not then say: “I see it bright,” or “I see him very tall,” or “I behold him old;” but you say: “*it seems* bright”—“*he seems* very tall”—“he looks old.”

So, again, you say: “I will taste it”—meaning you will place it on your tongue. But having done so, you then say, “it tastes”—as: “it *tastes* like wine and water.” And again: “let me smell it”—meaning “suffer me to place it under my nose.” But having placed it there, you then say, “it smells”—“it smells like garlic.” And so on of all the other senses.

Although, therefore, the act of seeing, feeling, &c. are not operations performed by you, but upon you; nevertheless there are operations, preparatory and necessary, which must be performed, not always indeed, but very often, *by you*, before those operations called seeing, feeling, &c. can be performed *upon you*. When your eyes are open you cannot help seeing. But whether you will see any particular object or not, depends entirely on your will. Since it depends wholly upon your will whether you will perform those preparatory operations necessary to bring your eye into such a situation as shall allow any particular object to strike it.

It is the same with thinking. When you are awake, you cannot help thinking—that is, you cannot help being thinged or thought, according to the modern spelling. But whether you will think concerning (observe I am here obliged to use the preposition *concerning*) any particular objects or subject, as we say, depends very much, if not altogether, upon your will.

Since (as in the case of seeing) it depends on your will whether you will perform those preparatory actions necessary to cause things to thing you, or "strike you," or "appear to you," or "to run in your head," or "to jump into your mind," &c. &c.

I say then that, as, in order that any particular object may "*appear to you*," it is necessary that you perform the preparatory operation of *looking*—that is, turning toward it, and fixing your eye upon it—as, in order that any particular object may "*taste to you like*," it is necessary that you perform the preparatory operation of placing it in contact with your tongue—as, in order that any particular object may "*smell to you like*," it is necessary that you perform the preparatory operation of bringing it near your nose. So, in order that any *particular* object, or number of objects, may thing you, strike you, come into your mind, &c. &c. it is necessary that you perform the preparatory operation of *talking*, audibly or inaudibly. For, by virtue of that law called association, which exists not only between names and things, but between one name and another, and one thing and another, we no sooner begin to talk than multitudes of ideas and names crowd upon us, suggested to us one after another, in rapid succession, by the words we utter, and which ideas were not present to us before, and would not have been suggested to us at all, but for the act of talking—audibly or inaudibly. And as talking is dependent on our will, and is performed by us, so far, and no farther, is the operation of thinking performed by us, and dependent upon our will. And this twofold operation, the one preparatory and performed by us; the other subsequent, and performed upon us, is the reason why, with regard to the operation of thinking, as with regard to the five senses, we have this two-fold mode of expression concerning which I have been speaking. This too is the reason why I was just now obliged to use the preposition "*concerning*." For when we use the word think to denote that part of the operation which depends on us, we then use it in the sense of the word *talk*, and are obliged to use a preposition, since we never say, "I will talk" a certain thing, but always "I will talk *about*" a certain thing.

This, too, is the reason of that frequent expression among the uneducated—the speakers according to nature, and not according

to grammar—I mean the phrase “*said* I to myself,” when used instead of the words “*thought* I to myself.”

This, too, is the reason why most men, when they desire to bring certain objects to their recollection, and make them, as we say, the subject of thought, usually preface the operation by the utterance (very often audibly) of some such words as these: “let me see—let me consider”—and then they go on talking (very often still audibly) “if I do so and so, so and so will happen—that will never do—no, no—I must do it the other way.” And those who do not thus talk to themselves *audibly*, do so *inaudibly*. The *motions* of talking are gone through by the talking apparatus, but so slightly as to be with difficulty perceptible.

This, too, is the reason of that rapid motion of the lips which you will sometimes observe in passengers along the street. These men are but doing *more perceptibly* what all men, when they think, do *less* perceptibly.

The operation of talking to himself, too, constitutes the difference between what is called a thinking or thoughtful man, and a careless or superficial observer, or an unthinking or thoughtless man. The thinking man is always talking to himself—asking himself questions and replying to them—and he is thus constantly causing to pass before his mind a panorama of absent objects.

This, too, constitutes the peculiarity of what are called absent men. The absent man, though walking along the street, is not thinged by the surrounding objects—is not struck by them—does not observe them—because he is busied in talking to himself, and thus conjuring up pictures of things possibly from the remotest corners of the earth. And words are the talismans—the potent spells—which enable him to practise this enchantment.

As talking to one’s-self is (and is called) *audible* thinking, so thinking to one’s-self is nothing but *inaudible* talking. And it was the silent consciousness that when we are thinking we are in fact only talking to ourselves, which doubtless gave origin to the phrase “thinking aloud,” and which gives it its pertinence, its propriety, and significance.



A very remarkable instance of the interchangeable and indifferent use of the two words *say* and *think*, and one strongly illustrative and provative of the truth of my assertion, that talking and thinking are two words having the same meaning, occurs in the seventeenth verse of the twelfth chapter of St. Luke: "And he **THOUGHT** within himself, **SAYING**, what shall I do?" Here the present participle *saying* is actually made the present participle of the verb to think. The two words are used as though they were actually only two parts of the same word. As here used the present participle of the verb *to think* is *saying*. And the sense will not be at all affected however you transpose the words. You may either say, "he *thought* to himself, *thinking*:" or "he *said* to himself, *saying*:" or "he *said* to himself, *thinking*:" or "he *thought* to himself, *saying*." In the English version, *one and the same thing* is expressed by two different words having the same meaning, viz. *think* and *say*. And what is that one thing? Why, the words, "what shall I do." These words are both that which he *thought* and that which he *said*. But in the Greek text both the *thinking* and the *saying* are expressed by only one word: "Καὶ διελογίζετο ἐν ἑαυτῷ, λέγων· Τί ποιήσω;" for Διαλογιζομαι (to reason with oneself) and Λεγω (to say) are manifestly but one word, there being only precisely the same difference between their senses as there is between the senses of our phrase to talk, and *to talk or converse together*. Λεγω means to talk—Διαλογιζομαι to talk in dialogue—Λεγ being the root and containing the sense of both.

In the English, therefore, the two verbs *to think* and *to say* are both used, in the same sentence, to express one thing. In the Greek, that one thing is expressed by one word—and that word signifies to talk. "He thought within himself"—what did he think? Answer: the words, "*what shall I do?*" "He thought within himself, saying"—what did he say? Why, the same words, viz. "*what shall I do?*"

I say, then, that the verb *to think*, when used to denote any action performed by us, signifies *to talk*, and nothing else—as, for instance, when we say, "I will sit down and *think* about it." And the phrase *methinks* is a reflective form of the same word, signifying in a figurative sense, that things are talking to us, or

striking us, or coming into our minds, or occurring to us; and that it denotes simply remembrance or remembrance. We do not indeed mean that things actually speak to us. But so neither do we mean that they actually strike, or come, or jump, or run, (which last is the meaning of the word *occur*)—and yet in ordinary conversation and writing we constantly attribute these actions to them. In all these forms of speech we speak merely figuratively; and we do so in order to distinguish an effect produced by things upon us, independently of our will, and of any operation performed by us, from that physical operation called talking, which is dependent on our will, and which is performed by ourselves.

When a man or other animal is dreaming, he is merely thinged; and in relating his dream should say, “methought,” or it appeared or occurred to me. When a man says, “I will think about it,” all he means is that he will talk to himself about it; for this is all that he can do. If there be anything else which he can do we have no word in the language to express it.

*Think*, then, (not the verb, but the noun) like the noun *thing*, signifies speech. And *to think* signifies *to speech*, or *to speak*.

We have another word in our language which is but the same word with a slight variation; I mean the word *thank*.

For services rendered to us, which we cannot repay, either in kind or in coin, we give in return *thanks*—that is, grateful words—*kindly* speech. In the provinces, they say, “I *thank* you *kindly*”—that is, I give you kindly words—words denoting my kindly or grateful feelings. If we are to interpret language by things—if it be true that language was made for things, and not things for language—then the meaning of the word *thanks* will not admit of question. For what are those *things* for which the word *thanks* was made? Are they not manifestly words?

Our verb *to thank* and the Anglo-Saxon verb *thanc-ian* are, of course, the same word. And our verb *to think* is, of course, identical with the Anglo-Saxon verb *thenc-an*. But I say that

the two Anglo-Saxon verbs *thancian*, to thank, and *thencan*, to think, are also the same word. The Mæso-Gothic *thagkjan* (pronounced *thankjan*)—the Danish *tænke* (pronounced *tarnk*) and the Swedish *tänka*, all of which signify to think, approach very nearly in sound to our word *thank*, and the Anglo-Saxon *thancian*.

The Anglo-Saxon word *thanc-ful* signifies *thankful*—but the Anglo-Saxon word *thanc-ul* signifies *thoughtful*.

The Anglo-Saxon word *thanc-metuncg* signifies *deliberation*—but the Anglo-Saxon word *thanc-ung* signifies *thanking* or *thanks*.

But the root of all these words is literally one and the same, viz. *thanc*; which word *thanc* signifies, in two of the compound words just mentioned, *thanks*. While in the other two, it signifies *thought*.

Our word *thing* is, of course, identical with the Anglo-Saxon word *thing*. But the Anglo-Saxon word *thing* was also written *thinc*. And hence it is quite as good English to say, a good think, a bad think, somethink, nothink, as it is to say a good thing, a bad thing, something, nothing; since thing and think are only different ways of spelling one and the same pure Anglo-Saxon word. Horne Tooke was right therefore when he said, “the vulgar pronunciation of *nothink*, instead of *nothing*, is not so absurd as our contrary *fashion* makes it appear.” And Bishop Hooper, who so spelled it, spelled it correctly. For it is just as correct as the other.

The Anglo-Saxons made their nouns into verbs by post-fixing the word *an*, *ian*, *gan*, or *on*. Those, therefore, who spelled the noun thing with a *g*, spelled the verb too with a *g*, and their verb became (by the addition of *ian*) *thing-ian*.) But those who spelled the noun with a *c*, (*thinc*) spelled the verb with a *c* also, and their verb became (by the addition of *an*) *thinc-an*. *Thincan* was used impersonally: “swa me thincth,” i. e. so methinks, and is exactly equivalent to our phrase—so it appears or seems to me—so it strikes me—so it thingeth me, or methingeth, methinketh or methinks. But the noun *thing* or *thinc*, out of which both these verbs were made, had two meanings. Its



original meaning is *speech*. In its secondary sense it is merely a name for all objects in general. It is not at all surprising, therefore, having got two verbs differently spelled out of one noun having two meanings, that one of these verbs should be appropriated to attribute action to the noun in one of its senses, and the other to attribute action to it in its other sense. And thus, while the verb *thingian* was used to signify *to speech*, or *to speak*, the other verb, *thincan*, became appropriated to signify *to be thinged*—that is, acted upon by things. This distinction was evidently required, and the two different ways of spelling the same verb presented a convenient method of making it.

But I say further that the Anglo-Saxon verbs *thinc-an*, to seem—*thanc-ian*, to thank—*thenc-an*, to think—*thing-ian*, to speak—and the English verbs *to-thank* and *to-think*, are one and the same word, and have all one primary meaning, and that is, *to-speak*. They are manifestly only so many different ways of spelling the Anglo-Saxon verb *thing-ian*, to-speak.

I have already shown you how very nearly, both in spelling and sound, the Moeso-Gothic, Danish, and Swedish words for *think*, approach to our word *thank*. And the Irish Gaelic word *taing* (which signifies *thanks*) does not differ greatly, either in sound or spelling from our word *thing*, and still less from the Friesic *ding*, and the modern German *ting*. And there is only the same difference between the senses of *thincan* and *thencan* that there is between the senses of our two phrases, “*I think*,” and “*it strikes me*,” or “*something tells me*.”

They are two verbs made out of the same noun *thinc* or *thing*, which noun has two meanings. And one of the verbs has been appropriated to signify that part of the operation of thinking which consists in speaking, and is made out of the noun in its primary sense of *speech*; while the other has been appropriated to signify that part of the operation of thinking which consists of the operation of things upon us, and which we now denote by the phrase “*it strikes me*,” or “*something tells me*,” or “*it seems to me*,” and is taken from the noun in that secondary sense which we now always give to the word *thing*. And as we now sometimes use the phrases, “*I think*,” and “*it seems to*

me," indifferently one for the other, so also were the words *thencan*, to think, and *thincan*, to seem, used indifferently one for the other by the Anglo-Saxons. Thus, *me gethuhte* may either be translated *it seemed to me*, or *I thought*—*me that riht ne thinketh*, to me that seems not right, or, I thought that not right—*hwæt thincth the that thu sy*, what seems to thee that thou art, or, what thinkest thou that thou art? And again, *thencan* was also used in the sense of *thincan*, for it was often employed in the sense of remember. But I suppose no one will say that remembering is an operation performed by us. All, I think, will admit that the remembrance of things comes to us wholly independent alike of our will, and of any action of ours. I suppose no one will be hardy enough to assert that the recollected images of things which come to us in our sleep do so in obedience to any action or operation performed by the sleeper!

No—it was found necessary, as it is now, to distinguish between that part of the process of thinking which is performed by us at our pleasure, viz. talking, and that other part of the operation which is performed independently of us, and by things upon us; and having already got two spellings for one word, they took the one spelling and appropriated it to one purpose, and the other for the other purpose.

The root of all is the word *thing* in its primary sense of *talk*. *Thencan* signifies literally *to perform those actions* which we denominate *speaking*—while *thincan* (although it literally mean the same) was figuratively used to signify *to have those effects* produced upon us by things which we now call ideas of things, or remembrances of things, and which they called (for want of a better phrase) *being talked to by things*; and which figurative form of speech is still preserved in the phrase *something tells me*, or, in the still more figurative and far-fetched expressions, *something strikes me—it jumped into my mind*, &c. &c.

*Ic thence* (pronounced *thenke*) signifies *I myself talk*; and *me thincth* means *something else talks to me*. And between the intelligible operation of talking ourselves, and the intelligible operation of being spoken to, i. e. struck or impressed by things,

there is no intermediate operation whatever. Nor is there, nor was there ever, in our language, or in the language of any other people, any name or sign of any such imaginary operation. Nor does there exist any, the slightest necessity for supposing any such mysterious agent, in order to account for the unmeasured superiority of human knowledge over that of the brute.

“Some men,” says Professor Stewart, “even in their private speculations, not only use words as an instrument of thought, but form the words into sentences.” “What is thus alleged, is true of all men,” says A. B. Johnson. “If you repeat, in thought, the alphabet, you may employ your organs of speech so forcibly, that the thoughts will require but a little more energy to become audible words. Endeavour to avoid any agency of the tongue, lips, and breath, you will detect a slight agency, and of the tongue especially. The more freely we permit the tongue’s movements, the more distinctly we can think the alphabet. If you stand before a mirror and protrude your tongue, you will see it either dilate or thicken, as each letter is pronounced in thought. The experiment must be made with letters whose articulation is lingual.” “We do not think *of* words, as our theories lead us to say, but we think *words themselves*. A Frenchman thinks French words, and an Englishman, English.”

Having shown that our word *think* is nothing more than the Anglo-Saxon noun *thinc*, or *thing*, made into a verb by the preaddition of *to*; and that to-think must, therefore, signify to talk, the supposed operation of thinking is thus left without a name in the language; or else that it borrowed the name of thinking, i. e. talking, at some time posterior to the first invention of the word; and thus two separate and different operations came to be designated by one and the same name.

If this monstrous supposition should obtain, I am then entitled to ask, how it happened that this extraordinary and important and characteristic operation performed by all men, and peculiar to man, should not have received an earlier designation, and one proper to itself? Why should it be reduced to the necessity of only *sharing a name* between itself



and another operation? And why was the operation of talking selected to designate it in preference to sneezing, or hearing, or, indeed, any other word in the language? At what time, too, was the word signifying *to-talk* forcibly and arbitrarily made to signify *thinking* also? When did men first discover that they were capable of performing the operation of *thinking*, in addition to that other operation of talking? And when they first discovered that they could perform this operation, how came they not to appropriate a name wholly and exclusively to denote so wonderful an operation, and one, too, so characteristic of man? How came they to suffer it to walk the world under a borrowed name? And before the language became a written one, and when the words *thencan* and *thincan* were both used to designate talking, how did the hearers manage to know when these words were used in their original sense of speaking, and when in their new sense of thinking?

But there is another, and, in my estimation, an insurmountable argument against the existence of any such operation performed by us as that of thinking, apart from talking. And it is this—that it is wholly *unnecessary*. For cannot we, if it so please us, *always think aloud* on any subject we wish? If a man sit down to solve a problem cannot he do it by thinking aloud? Let any man try this, and he will find that he can do it, not only as well, but better. But to think aloud is to talk. And if a man can think aloud, he can also think in audible whispers—and if in audible whispers, in inaudible whispers also.

Again: if a question of importance be put to one man, he says, “I will *think* about it, and give you my answer to-morrow.” And he sits down to do so. But if that question be put simultaneously to *two* or more persons whose interests are mutually involved in the answer to be given, they also *say*, “we will think about it, and give you our answer to-morrow.” But what is it they *do*? Why, as soon as the questioner is gone, they say to each other, “now let us *talk* this matter over, and determine at once what answer it is best to give on this subject.” And they sit down and begin to discuss the matter directly, and they continue to talk until they have decided on the answer. The only difference between these two cases is that while the

one man talks to himself, the others talk to each other. Of the one man it would be said that "he is thinking"—of the others, "they are talking." Yet the two operations, if two they be, are only two different ways of obtaining the same result, viz. the best answer to be given to the question. And that result would be equally well produced by either method.

B.

But do not men think while they are talking?

A.

I have said, you know, that thinking is a double operation, consisting of "being struck," or "having ideas or sensations," or "of being thinged," i. e. affected by things, or figuratively "spoken to by things"—in one word, consisting of remembering and talking. If, therefore, you mean to ask whether people can remember when they are talking, I answer, yes, and the act of talking causes them to remember multitudes of things which would not otherwise have occurred to them at that particular time at which they were wanted. This is effected by what is called the association existing between things, and between things and their names. And this is what I meant when I said, in a very early part of our conversation, that the law of association answers a most important end in the constitution of man's nature.

Let us suppose two brothers have determined to build a house for their mutual accommodation and at their mutual charges.

At present they have done no more than merely determining that they will "build a house."

The *thinking* would then probably proceed something in this manner. "Well, brother, we will build a house—that's settled—but where shall we build it?—that's the next question." Now the frequent repetition of this word "build" would have already caused both brothers to remember whatever they had lately seen or heard having reference to "*building*." It would have already caused the one brother to remember, probably, that he had the other day seen a certain board whereon were written the words: "This land to be let on *building* leases." He would immediately mention this to the other. But the other, in the mean time, would probably remember that his neighbour had

told him last week that he had a piece of very eligible freehold ground which he was desirous of selling, and which would be very valuable to any gentleman desirous of building. This recollection, or idea, or remembered circumstance, he now puts into words for the purpose of communicating it to his brother; and adds, perhaps, "which shall we do? Shall we take a piece of land on lease, or *purchase* a piece of freehold ground?" But now the word "purchase" brings to their memory all the things associated with purchasing—the chief of which is money—and immediately their minds wander to their bankers, as we say in ordinary language. But it is not their minds which wander to the banking-house, but the word "purchase" has brought the banking-house to them—or the funds—or whatever place it happens to be in which they possess available sums of money.

Having thus counted their money, and having found that they can afford to purchase, and having determined that they will have the freehold, then comes the question: "what sort of house shall it be? How large? Of brick or stone? Of what style of architecture?" If either of them had seen any one particular house, whose appearance and internal arrangement he had admired, these questions would instantly bring that house to his mind. He would then proceed to describe it to his brother. "I should like to go and look over it with you," says the brother. To which the other perhaps replies, "that, I am sorry to say, is now impossible. It was burnt to the ground last week." But these words "*burnt to the ground*" are associated with another set of remembered things—of houses on fire—of children burnt to death, &c.—and it is not improbable that they would cease to think, for a time, about building, in order to relate, one to the other, the history of a terrible fire attended by the loss of several lives, which he had lately read in the paper. It would also cause them to remember that they had heard that it was possible to build houses "fire-proof"—and both would exclaim, "we will certainly have our house built "fire-proof." And thus that part of the building question would have been *thought about*, and settled.

The whole process of *thinking about building a house* might be thus pursued from beginning to end, and shown to consist of



nothing but talking and remembering. And it would be the same were the question how to solve a mathematical, or ethical, or political problem.

Now it is quite clear, that all which has been said aloud by these two men (or something like it) might have been said in whispers barely audible. And it is equally clear that the whole of it might have been said by one man to himself without moving his lips—and then it would have been, and would have been called, *thinking*.

A gentleman with whom I was in conversation the other day, and who had read my definition of mind, said that, although he could not refute the definition, he felt convinced that something more was necessary in certain processes of reasoning besides mere memory; although he could not tell what it was. And he was right. Something more *is* necessary. And that *something more* is *talking*.

Our word *reason* is a Latin word, and bears the same relation to the Latin word for *thing*, which our word *think* bears to the Anglo-Saxon word *thing*.

We get the word *reason* from the French *raison*—which they got from the Latin *ratio*—which the Latins made out of the word *ratus*, the past participle of their own verb *reor*—which verb *reor* they made out of the Latin noun *res*, a thing.

Since, then, the whole process of thinking consists of nothing else than talking and remembering—and since it is impossible to deny that the inferior animals can remember—and since mind is nothing more than another name for remembered matter—it directly follows that there is no difference whatever between the mental constitution of man and that of the animals next below him—at least, none which can be predicated from any exclusive faculty hitherto supposed to be represented by the words mind, think, intellect, &c.—and that if there be any exclusive mental faculty proper to man alone, it is not only without a name in any language, but also without a purpose.

The faculty of speech is fully sufficient of itself to account, simply and rationally, for all the sublime speculations and accumulated knowledge which place man at the summit of the animal chain; and, while it supposes no fundamental difference

whatever in his nature, bestows on him all his amount of superior power. It constitutes the sole difference between the earthly nature of man and his brute-brother. Compacted, in all essentials, of the same organs—brought into existence by the same laws—supported by the same living principles—performing the same animal functions—endowed with the same senses—characterized by the same appetites, hunger, thirst, sexual desire—exhibiting the same passions, filial love, parental affection—“hurt with the same weapons, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer”—they live, love, and die alike in a common obedience to a code of laws common to their common nature.

Since man, then, (excepting that of speech) possesses no faculty and no sense which is not common to the animals next below him—and since it will be readily admitted that these latter have no other sources of knowledge than the senses—it follows that these also constitute the sole fountains of all human knowledge. For although language proffers itself as the ready *means* of recording, communicating, and accumulating knowledge, yet this is all it can do.

Words of themselves are, literally and absolutely, sounds, and nothing else but sounds. They are not knowledge, but the signs of knowledge. You can no more talk ideas into any man, than you can talk the colour of the rose into a blind man—the sound of a trumpet into a deaf man—or the fragrance of rosemary into one destitute of smell. No words, no possible phraseology, no ingenuity, can discourse into me one single new idea—unless, indeed, it be the idea of a new sound. Nothing but our senses can furnish us with ideas or sensations, which are the component parts of knowledge.

Words can make us know words, and nothing but words. Nothing but our senses can make us know things.

The ability to give names to things, then, is the sole exclusive characteristic by which the Deity has vouchsafed to distinguish men above the inferior animals; and to which he owes the whole of his vast superiority of knowledge and power.

And this is the altar which I said I would raise to the faculty of speech.

Endow an elephant with the gift of speech—teach him the use of the words *cause, suppose, effect, therefore, &c., &c.*—when he has placed his foot on a dog, and crushed him to death, tell him to call his foot the *cause* of the dog's death, and the dog's death the *effect* of the pressure of his foot—and teach him the use of the other words by similar means—give him, moreover, a strong interest in the success of his studies—and I am confident it would not be difficult to prove to any unprejudiced mind, that it might fairly be predicated of such an elephant that he could be made to comprehend the several steps of that stumbling-block of young academics—that *pons asinorum*—the fifth problem of Euclid. I say thus much might be fairly predicated of such an elephant, from the powers of reasoning which some of them have actually exhibited.

If a hungry dog find the carcase of a sheep beneath a particular tree, in a remote field, he will satisfy his hunger, and return to his master's house. When his hunger returns on the following day, he will repair again to the same spot. The sensation of hunger, in this case, supplies to the dog the office of words. The sensation of hunger recalls to his mind the field, the tree, and the carcase, and the road which leads to them; and he proceeds straightway to the spot, in the expectation, or hope, or desire (call it what you please) of finding the remnant of the sheep still there. Now if you put all this into the proper words, it will exhibit a regular process of reasoning. But the words, and the *words alone*, will be yours—the *reasoning* will be the dog's.

It is language which enables us to suppose cases and construct theories.

Sir Isaac Newton knew and remembered that, if a billiard ball be suspended by a string from a nail in the wall, and be then struck in a direction parallel with the wall, and at right angles with the string, its motion will describe a circle of which the nail will be the centre. He also knew that certain bodies have the power of attracting other certain bodies.

He then proceeded to give new names to the billiard ball, the string, and the nail. He called the billiard ball the *earth*—the nail he called the *sun*—and the string which was stretched be-



tween the nail and the ball he called the sun's attraction of the earth towards itself. When his hand struck the ball, in order to make it describe the circular motion I have mentioned, he called the impetus, given by the hand to the ball, by the name of the projectile force.

He then proceeded to talk to himself about (as he supposed) the sun, the earth, the attractive and projectile forces. But who does not clearly perceive that it was, in fact and reality, not the earth, the sun, &c. about which he was talking, but the billiard ball, the nail, the hand which struck the ball, and the known phenomena of the magnet. In order to apply this theory to the other planets, he had only to change the name once more in succession for each planet. And the billiard ball which, in the ordinary experiment was called a billiard ball, took, in the hands of Sir Isaac Newton, the names in succession of all the planets. The names which he traced on paper were the names of the planets. But the thing that was in his mind, and which was really represented by those names was the billiard ball. Sometimes he called the billiard ball the moon, and then he called the nail the earth. Sometimes the nail took the name of Jupiter; and then the billiard ball became one of his satellites. Newton supposed he was reasoning of the earth, the moon, Jupiter and his satellites; but in fact he was only reasoning of the billiard ball, the nail, and the magnet, under the assumed names of these planets.

Had not language enabled Newton to give names to things, and to substitute thus one name for another, he could not have stirred a single step.

By the way, another very common form of expression has this moment occurred to me, by which like our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, we figuratively consider things which strike us, or occur to our remembrance, as *speaking* to us. I have said the ancient phrase *methinks* or *methings* is exactly equivalent with *something strikes me* or *something tells me*—or *me strikes* or *me tells*. The phrase which has just occurred to me is this: "the thing *speaks* for itself."

Having thus shown, and, as I unfeignedly believe, incontrovertibly, that no fundamental difference between brute nature

and human nature can be predicated in favour of man, from any reference to those pretended exclusive human characteristics supposed to be represented by the words intellect, mind, thinking principle, and their synonyms, I do not know that any other pretext for such difference remains to be removed.

B.

Yes—there is another—"the instinctive wish to know"—which is universally believed to characterise man, and distinguish him from all other animals.

A.

Ay, true—I forgot "man's instinctive wish to know." But this is an exceedingly vague and general phrase. There are some things, it is true, which all men alike desire to know. But then there are some things which only some men desire to know, and not others. But, as you say, all men have "an instinctive desire to know." For instance—some men have "an instinctive wish to know"—how to get themselves talked about hundreds of years after they shall have been dead, buried, devoured, thoroughly digested, and finally converted into the slimy juices of the earth-worm's body. I myself have a strong "instinctive wish to know"—how to acquire a thousand a-year without working like a pack-horse. This last "instinctive wish to know" is, I believe, rather common than not. And the man who first desired to know—how to impress letters on paper by machinery instead of the goose-quill: the man who first desired to know—how to apply steam to practical purposes: the man who first desired to know—how to light our streets with gas: the man who first desired to know—how to apply chemistry to manufacturing purposes: the man who first desired to know—how to spin with spinning jennies instead of human hands: and the men who are at this moment torturing their brains on account of their "instinctive wish to know"—how to propel steam-engines by means of a power which shall cost nothing, instead of coals which cost a great deal—I say, all these men, I firmly believe, did and do possess a strong "instinctive wish to know"—how to acquire a fortune.

What a farce is all that has been said and sung about this same "instinctive wish to know!" Has not a dog, when he is

hungry, “an instinctive wish to know”—where to find food?—when thirsty—where to find a ditch?—when cold and in danger—where to find shelter and protection? Who does not see at a glance that this “instinctive wish to know,” as it is falsely called, is nothing else but “an instinctive wish to *acquire*?”—that is, to acquire the means of administering to our own gratification? Who does not perceive that this pretended “wish to know” is but one of the ten thousand protean manifestations of self-love—and is equally proper to the hog and the dog—to fish, flesh, and fowl—to bird, beast, and bat—to men, mice, and monkeys? It is the manifestation of that great law which God has devised for the preservation, perpetuation, and well-being of all his creatures. It is that great law of God—the law of self-love—which, though fools affect to despise it, and a few madmen have dared to disobey it, is the mainspring and the motive of all animal actions, whether brute or human—saving those which arise from other instincts more particularly adapted to the preservation of the species rather than the individual—as, for instance, parental affection.

It does not make the difference of a straw, that one man desires posthumous fame—another wealth—another that feeling of gratification and satisfaction and self-laudation, which results from the successful prosecution of abstruse calculations! Self-gratification, in one shape or other, is the one sole object of pursuit with all.

Our very hope of heaven—what is it?—but a desire to enjoy?

Self-love excites in us a desire to possess everything which can, or which we fancy can, administer to our gratification. In our civilized condition we have created for ourselves a thousand artificial wants—and the multifarious means necessary to gratify these multifarious wants give a multifarious character to the manifestations of self-love.

The inferior animals have no artificial wants—they are all natural, and therefore uniform and few. And the uniformity and fewness (see—I have just unwittingly created a new abstract idea) of their wants, give a uniformity and fewness to the modes in which their self-love is manifested.



It is in vain that man struggles to emancipate himself from the common chain whereof his Creator has made him an indissoluble link. The very weed which forms "the green mantle of the standing pool" claims kindred with him—and justly. For the fundamental laws of life—absorption, secretion, respiration, and circulation—the laws which govern even the generative functions—and the living actions therefrom resulting—are not exclusive to man or brute—but must be acknowledged and obeyed by him in common with most, if not all, of the great vegetable family. Every man who understands the anatomy and physiology of plants must be compelled to acknowledge this. And I speak advisedly when I say, that there is less fundamental difference between a man and a cabbage, than there is between a grain of mustard seed and a grain of sand.

If we would obey the Delphic oracle and know ourselves, we must look beneath the skin; for we can only arrive at such knowledge by taking the machinery to pieces, and comparing it organ by organ, and function by function, with the machinery of other animals. And he who does this will be compelled to admit the perfect homogeneity of human organization, in all essentials, with that of the animals next below him. It is not the fur of the fox, the scale of the salmon, the plumage of the bird, or the shell of the lobster, which is sufficient to unlink these animals from the common animal chain. Nor can the organs of speech confer that privilege on man. The greater or less developement of an os calcis or an os coccygis, may serve well enough to inform the natural philosopher under what class to rank this or that particular animal, for the convenience of the student. But such trivial varieties of configuration are manifestly and entirely insufficient to establish any fundamental difference in the general animal nature. To those who contemplate only the surface of things, there is little similarity between the external skin of a man, and the shell of a lobster. The physiologist, however, knows well enough that the little laminæ composing the human scarf-skin, the scale of the fish, and the shell of the lobster, are in reality fundamentally the same. There is no other difference between them than that which exists between several suits of armour of different sizes,

fashions, and patterns. Like the several suits of armour, they are essentially the same, only differing in texture and configuration, in order to reconcile those grand characteristics of creation, simplicity with infinite variety; and in order to accommodate themselves to the different wants arising out of the different circumstances with which the different animals are destined to be surrounded. The hand of man is not the less a fore-paw, and the fore-paw of the tiger is not the less a hand, because a difference of configuration in the bones, muscles, tendons, and nails, calculated to adapt each the better to the wants of either animal, has caused us to distinguish them by different names. In all fundamental essentials they are the same instrument.

But even this difference of configuration is confined, in the animals next immediately below man, almost entirely to the bones, muscles, &c. In the vital organs of these animals—the brain, the spinal marrow, the lungs, heart, liver, kidneys, &c.—the difference of configuration is extremely slight indeed. The difference between their blood and the blood of man is altogether minute and trifling, and easily accounted for; while the nervous fluid, whatever it be, is unquestionably the same, as certain galvanic experiments, I think, fully prove.

The same intimate relation and fundamental fellowship between the mere earthly nature of man and the upper classes of the meaner animals is as easily discoverable from a comparison drawn between the natural propensities and actual conduct of the two beings. To the attentive observer, unprejudiced and fancy-free, these again are, in all essentials, the same; and do not differ, in any way, more than the scale of the salmon differs from the lobster's shell—or the human scarf-skin from the salmon's scales. Nor is this at all surprising—seeing that the conduct of both is the necessary result of the same great general laws—the chief of which is the continuation of the several species.

Nor is it necessary, in order to exhibit this parallel, to travel to the forest inhabitants of New Zealand. Man is, in all essentials, everywhere the same—in every age, in every clime, and in every intermediate condition between utter barbarism

and polished civilization. “*Naturam expelles furca, tamen usque recurret,*” said somebody—I think Horace. That is to say, “you may thrust nature out of doors with a pitch-fork as often as you please, but she will be sure to get in again, either at the window, or through the key-hole.” If things be called by their right names, I know of no vice or crime common to barbarians which is not practised, openly or secretly, in some one or other of the civilized communities of mankind—while there are hundreds of vices daily practised in civilized societies of which the savage is entirely guiltless. Murder, rapine, theft, infanticide—revenge, hatred, malice—are all, or any of these, strangers to civilized communities? They are not so frequent indeed—but in how many instances is the non-commission of these crimes owing, not to any difference or improvement in the nature of man, but solely to the fear of punishment?

B.

What say you to cannibalism, and human sacrifices to false gods?

A.

I say that they are not instances which detract in any way from the truth of what I have said. The crime of murder is not enhanced, in the minutest fraction, whether the murderer afterward eat his victim himself, as the Caribs do—or deliver him over to be eaten by the worms as we do—or to be eaten by the sharks, as they do at sea. The crime is the crime of murder, and nothing more—and is an offence against God. The after act is merely an offence against the habits and manners of civilized men—and does not enhance the crime—no, not the millionth part of an atom. But it requires no very acute observer to discover that in almost all instances, the punishment awarded directly or indirectly to offences against the laws of man, is infinitely greater than that awarded to offences against the laws of God. A few years ago, forgery was punished by death. A man may still get drunk, and thus commit a great sin against the laws which God has laid down for the preservation of his health, as often as he pleases to pay five shillings to the magistrate—and even this slight fine is scarcely ever enforced. But many much stronger and more apposite instances than this might have been easily selected.



As to your other instance—human sacrifices offered to false gods—I can scarcely suppose you in earnest. What! are there no human sacrifices made in this age of intellectual elevation and moral improvement? Are there no human sacrifices offered to those Molochs—those false gods—conventional custom and opinion? Is there no human blood on *their* altars.

Look at yon fair-haired youth. A few years ago he was a healthy and chubby boy, employed by the farmers to keep the crows from the wheat—a thoughtless, happy urchin, luxuriating at his lazy length on the sunny bank, revelling in the enjoyment of vigorous health, and giving promise of a sturdy manhood, and a lengthened life.

A gentleman in his neighbourhood, attracted by the boy's personal appearance, and gentle temper, took a fancy to him. He proposed to send him to a good school, at his own expense, and (to use his own expression) to make a gentleman of him. The offer pleased the boy, and gratified the pride of his parents. They joyfully accepted the offer—proud to see a son of theirs thus "*elevated in the scale of society.*"

He was clothed in a genteel suit of fine cloth, and decorated with a white fall-down collar over his shoulders, and sent to boarding school, and was taught the ordinary routine business of such schools.

Within the last twelve months, his patron procured him a situation in a highly respectable mercantile house in London, at a salary of sixty pounds for the first year, and to be increased as he got older and more useful.

His parents were grateful and delighted. They were proud to see their young son dressed like a gentleman, and having the gait and manners and language of a gentleman, taking his place on the coach bound for the great city. And then his salary! sixty pounds a year! why, it was more than the father could earn for the support of his whole family! and this boy was but fifteen! "What a fine thing is education!" said they—

"When house and land and money's spent,  
Then learning is most excellent."

And with this morsel of philosophical reflection, they resumed their daily employment.

Last Christmas, this boy sent his parents five pounds. But he could ill spare it. For being "elevated in the scale of society" he felt himself compelled, and indeed the nature of his employment obliged him, to dress what is called respectably—to spend more money for one suit of clothes than would have clothed all his country brothers and sisters, who were not "elevated in the scale of society," for a whole year. And then he must have respectable lodgings, and there was his weekly washing bill, and sundry other little expenses incurred to supply sundry little wants which his new situation entailed upon him, and there was also his weekly board.

He had not been in London more than three months before he became subjected to a new and unexpected expense in the shape of a doctor's bill.

Some how or other, he began to lose his appetite—and he became thinner too—he lost much of his early buoyancy of spirit—and had contracted a nasty troublesome cough. That cough has never left him—it never will leave him—twelve months' confinement to the desk in this great tomb of health—the city of London—has done for him what no human skill can undo. Consumption has set her mark upon him, and doomed him irrevocably to an early death.

With a faint hope of protracting his life for some few months, I spoke of a removal to the country. But he will not hear of it. He cannot believe that there is anything of importance the matter with him. He feels no pain, and his appetite is already returning. "And when I can eat heartily again," said he, "of course I shall get stronger."

A few months more will fully and fearfully undeceive him.

This is not the history of a solitary individual. It is the annual history of many hundreds.

The sedentary employment, and close atmosphere of a city counting-house, acting on a frame not originally diseased, but delicately constructed, has condemned this boy to premature death. Had he remained a free and careless denizen of the sunny fields of his own county, earning his bread by the wholesome exercise of his limbs, instead of the continuous daily tension and excitement of his brain, first in the school and then

olden time, at the foot of the sacrificial altar, as propitiatory offerings to false gods, were, *de facto*, but so many sacrifices to public opinion—then, as now. And those who lose their lives in the struggling effort to propitiate the public opinion of the present day, are, *de facto*, but so many sacrifices to false gods—now, as then. The idol, and the idol-worship, and the sacrifice, are, in all but in name, interchangeably one and the same. We shudder at the fate and deplore the benighted ignorance of the poor wretch who prostrates himself beneath the wheel of the car of the Hindu Juggernaut, courting a voluntary, and, as he supposes, a sanctified death. The Juggernaut of our own worship, conventional opinion, drives rampant before our faces, over the necks of thousands, while we clap our hands and shout, and, like the Pharisee of old, bless God that we are not as other nations—barbarians, and idolators—but an enlightened and an intellectual people.

It is still with us, as it was of yore with the Athenians—all are barbarians except our spotless and superlative selves.

I have said that, as the identity of man's nature with that of the meaner animals is proved by the identity (in all essentials) of their organization, as revealed to the anatomical and physiological inquirer; so he who can contemplate their actions with the unwinking eye of a philosophy, uncompromising—sternly faithful to the truth—whose glances can neither be dazzled by any false glitter, nor impeded by any fog of language, nor cheated by any trickery of logic—whose gaze can be undisturbed though he look upon a Gorgon, and can detect, with a sure recognition, both the ass in the lion's skin, and the truth however dexterously concealed—I say, he who can thus, with an utter recklessness and indifference to all things but the truth, contemplate and compare the actions of men and animals, will readily discover an identity in their conduct, and find an additional proof (if such were wanted) of the identity of their nature.

How is the life of an animal, in a state of nature, spent? In seeking for the means of satisfying his natural wants—in gratifying his natural appetites and passions—and in providing for his young. One animal accomplishes these great necessi-



ties of his nature by one set of means, and another by another. And into what else are all the actions of men resolvable? The mechanic and labourer, and journeyman tradesman—that, is the great bulk of civilized mankind—are constantly engaged from morning till night—in doing what?—is it not in acquiring the means of satisfying their natural wants, appetites, and passions, and of providing for their young? And if thwarted in these, will they not both (the man and the animal) very properly and very justly turn and rend him who opposes them?

But it is not necessary to pursue the analogy into all its minutiae. Every man's own reflection will enable him easily enough to complete it.

In the discussions, whether political or moral, relative to human evil, I would only direct men's attention to the true causes.

In a collection of essays, I lately saw the following little fable.

“Once upon a time a man, somewhat in drink belike, raised a dreadful outcry at the corner of the market-place, that ‘the world was all turned topsy-turvy; that the men and cattle were all walking with their feet uppermost; that the houses and earth at large (if they did not mind it) would fall into the sky; in short, that unless prompt means were taken, things in general were on the high road to the devil.’ As the people only laughed at him, he cried the louder and more vehemently; nay, at last, began adjuring, foaming, imprecating, when a good-natured auditor, going up, took the orator by the haunches, and softly inverting *his* position, set him down—on his feet. The which upon perceiving, his mind was staggered not a little. ‘Ha! deuce take it!’ cried he, rubbing his eyes, ‘so it was not the world that was hanging by its feet, then, but I that was standing on my head!’ ” How true!

We are perpetually complaining of the perverseness of human nature—never perceiving that, *de facto*, the perverseness lies in human art—and not in human nature—who stands as erect and firm upon her legs as at the first hour of her birth. How foolish!

Nature has laid it down as a law that man shall eat till his appetite be appeased. Up comes art with her spice-box, and

olden time, at the foot of the sacrificial altar, as propitiatory offerings to false gods, were, *de facto*, but so many sacrifices to public opinion—then, as now. And those who lose their lives in the struggling effort to propitiate the public opinion of the present day, are, *de facto*, but so many sacrifices to false gods—now, as then. The idol, and the idol-worship, and the sacrifice, are, in all but in name, interchangeably one and the same. We shudder at the fate and deplore the benighted ignorance of the poor wretch who prostrates himself beneath the wheel of the car of the Hindu Juggernaut, courting a voluntary, and, as he supposes, a sanctified death. The Juggernaut of our own worship, conventional opinion, drives rampant before our faces, over the necks of thousands, while we clap our hands and shout, and, like the Pharisee of old, bless God that we are not as other nations—barbarians, and idolators—but an enlightened and an intellectual people.

It is still with us, as it was of yore with the Athenians—all are barbarians except our spotless and superlative selves.

I have said that, as the identity of man's nature with that of the meaner animals is proved by the identity (in all essentials) of their organization, as revealed to the anatomical and physiological inquirer; so he who can contemplate their actions with the unwinking eye of a philosophy, uncompromising—sternly faithful to the truth—whose glances can neither be dazzled by any false glitter, nor impeded by any fog of language, nor cheated by any trickery of logic—whose gaze can be undisturbed though he look upon a Gorgon, and can detect, with a sure recognition, both the ass in the lion's skin, and the truth however dexterously concealed—I say, he who can thus, with an utter recklessness and indifference to all things but the truth, contemplate and compare the actions of men and animals, will readily discover an identity in their conduct, and find an additional proof (if such were wanted) of the identity of their nature.

How is the life of an animal, in a state of nature, spent? In seeking for the means of satisfying his natural wants—in gratifying his natural appetites and passions—and in providing for his young. One animal accomplishes these great necessi-

ties of his nature by one set of means, and another by another. And into what else are all the actions of men resolvable? The mechanic and labourer, and journeyman tradesman—that, is the great bulk of civilized mankind—are constantly engaged from morning till night—in doing what?—is it not in acquiring the means of satisfying their natural wants, appetites, and passions, and of providing for their young? And if thwarted in these, will they not both (the man and the animal) very properly and very justly turn and rend him who opposes them?

But it is not necessary to pursue the analogy into all its minutiae. Every man's own reflection will enable him easily enough to complete it.

In the discussions, whether political or moral, relative to human evil, I would only direct men's attention to the true causes.

In a collection of essays, I lately saw the following little fable.

“Once upon a time a man, somewhat in drink belike, raised a dreadful outcry at the corner of the market-place, that ‘the world was all turned topsy-turvy; that the men and cattle were all walking with their feet uppermost; that the houses and earth at large (if they did not mind it) would fall into the sky; in short, that unless prompt means were taken, things in general were on the high road to the devil.’ As the people only laughed at him, he cried the louder and more vehemently; nay, at last, began objuring, foaming, imprecating, when a good-natured auditor, going up, took the orator by the haunches, and softly inverting *his* position, set him down—on his feet. The which upon perceiving, his mind was staggered not a little. ‘Ha! deuce take it!’ cried he, rubbing his eyes, ‘so it was not the world that was hanging by its feet, then, but I that was standing on my head!’ ” How true!

We are perpetually complaining of the perverseness of human nature—never perceiving that, *de facto*, the perverseness lies in human art—and not in human nature—who stands as erect and firm upon her legs as at the first hour of her birth. How foolish!

Nature has laid it down as a law that man shall eat till his appetite be appeased. Up comes art with her spice-box, and



sprinkles his food with a powder which prolongs and provokes appetite long after his natural wants are satisfied—and man eats himself into an apoplexy. Whereupon art exclaims: “How perverse! How excessively perverse of man, thus to eat himself into an apoplexy!”

It is a law of nature that man shall scratch himself whenever he itches. Art rubs him all over with cowage, which produces an itching which is intolerable—and man scratches himself into numberless sores. Whereupon art exclaims: “How excessively perverse of man, thus to scratch himself into sores!”

There is a perpetual war of art against nature. Nature always gets the best of it—and art endeavours to recompense herself by lavishing all sorts of ill names upon poor innocent human nature; who, if art did not meddle with her affairs, would never trouble her head about the affairs of art. But though beaten at every point, art, like an indomitable vixen, still returns to the charge; and, at every repulse, runs crying back to her children, exclaiming against the perversity of nature because she will not sit quiet and let art cut her throat. “Look!” cries she, to her sons and daughters—“look! how that ill-tempered, perverse, base, vile, abominable thing—that nasty, good-for-nothing human nature—has scratched my face, and torn my clothes, and blackened my poor eyes!” And, thereupon, her passion being worked up by the mere enumeration of her wrongs, she returns to the attack upon poor, quiet, inoffensive human nature, and gets her face scratched again for her pains. But as nature was unquestionably the first proprietor of the soil, and is moreover immeasurably the stronger of the two, really I see no manner of reason why art should complain because nature will not quit her dominions, or any part of them, to please this mushroom pretender to her throne.

“Naturam expelles furca, tamen usque recurret”—that is, “you may expel nature with a fork, but she will always return.” All men admire this line of the old poet. All men acknowledge its truth. It is quoted on all hands by men of all parties. Wonderful! that men should dwell with admiration, for ages, upon the truth of certain *premises*, and yet never once think of the *conclusion* to which those premises inevitably lead!

Wonderful ! that all men should acknowledge that it is fruitless—a mere waste of time—an assured labour in vain—to attempt “to expel nature with a fork,” and yet that they should continue to pass their whole lives in one long and laborious effort “to expel nature with a fork !”

What are we doing, at this moment, with the New Zealanders ? We are attempting to “expel nature with a fork.” Horace has said *naturam expellere furca* is a labor in vain—and having expressed our admiration of the sentiment, and admitted that its truth is undeniable, we gravely proceed straight to New Zealand for the avowed purpose *naturam expellere furca*.

The wise-ones of a by-gone century were earnestly bent on “expelling the nature” of the Red Indian of the North American forest—not indeed “with a fork”—but with fire and sword. But here again nature was so unreasonably perverse that she would not be expelled. So they expelled the Red Indian himself—out of the world.

One would have supposed this practical commentary on Horace’s aphorism, would have satisfied mankind of the folly of attempting “to expel nature,” either with fire or fork. No such thing. They are as hotly bent upon the same pursuit now as ever. Every man arms himself with a fork, and runs away panting and toiling, resolved to poke it into the ribs of nature. But somehow or other she constantly eludes his thrust, and when he returns from his crusade, he is enraged to find her quietly seated again by the hearth of her ancient home. How exceedingly perverse of human nature !

Public opinion is made up of a chaotic assemblage of premises, whose conclusions are in utter hostility to each other. Every man’s mind is charged with a number of opinions which he derives in his youth, without examination, and unconsciously, from the society in which he moves, and from the books or papers which his position happens to throw first in his way. In after life, instead of measuring these opinions by the truth, he measures the truth by these opinions. If he meet with any new proposition, like that of Horace, which is undeniably true on the face of it, he assents to it in a moment—admits it—applauds it—quotes it. By and bye, somebody shows him that,

if the new proposition be true, some of his old opinions must necessarily be false. "Then," says he, the new proposition "cannot be true." "I admitted it too hastily"—"I did not perceive its tendency"—and thus he rejects the truth because it has a *tendency* to subvert preconceived opinions. It never occurs to him, for a moment, to reject a preconceived opinion because it has a tendency to belie the truth. The bare possibility that his preconceived opinions may be wrong, backed as they are by the opinions of society, never for an instant enters his mind. He has, therefore, as it seems to him, but one alternative—and that is to reject the new proposition, and to take it for granted that it must be false. If, in spite of all he can do, it still wear the appearance of truth, he lays the fault on his own supposed want of sufficient ingenuity to detect its falsehood. Or else he tries to wriggle himself out of the difficulty by the hocus-pocus of words.

If a proposition be made to him which is apparently true, and yet manifestly opposed to some preconceived opinion, he does not quietly proceed to place them in the scales, wholly indifferent as to which prove the heavier, but all his energies are instantly and exclusively employed to save his preconceived opinion from kicking the beam. He does not look about him for arguments equally applicable to both. He only looks for arguments calculated to support the one and disprove the other. If a man would really arrive at the truth, he must look about for arguments to *disprove* his own opinions, with even greater earnestness than he searches for arguments to *prove* them.

But men estimate the value of opinion as they do money. And because a guinea, a thousand times repeated, is a thousand times more valuable than a single guinea, they seem to think that an opinion, echoed by a thousand tongues, is a thousand times more just than if it were the opinion of one man only. But when it is remembered that not more than one man in a thousand ever doubts or questions his own opinions, nor therefore, ever examines them, the fallacy of this mode of estimating their value becomes apparent.

If any opinion be expressed by a thousand men, on any great



moral question, the opinion is probably the opinion of one man only. The rest are merely echoes—*voces et præterea nihil*.

But such an opinion can derive no grain of weight from the amount of numbers by whom it is professed. It is valuable or worthless solely as it is supported, or otherwise, by the testimony of nature.

Men take up a number of opinions, which opinions are, in fact, premises leading to conclusions which are at variance. And they do this because, in adopting opinions, they do not adopt them because they have thoroughly examined them, but only because they see them everywhere taken for granted, and acted upon by others, and spoken of as things which nobody questions. When they do at last meet with any one who questions them, and shows that they are at variance one with another, they set that man down at once as a quibbler, and his arguments as ingenious sophisms, although often compelled to acknowledge that they cannot detect wherein the sophistry consists. But sophistry there must be somewhere. Why? Only because they are unable to conceive that what are called the established opinions of society can possibly be wrong. And yet the whole history of society—what does it exhibit as its very prime characteristic? Why a constant succession of changes of opinion. The opinions of yesterday are always wrong—the opinions of to-day are always right—and must not be questioned. But every to-day must soon become yesterday—and every to-morrow must soon become to-day. And when the opinions of to-day have become the opinions of yesterday, then they will be wrong. And when the opinions of to-morrow shall have become the opinions of to-day, then they will be right—until they also shall have become the opinions of yesterday—and then they will be wrong again. There is nothing permanent but the laws of nature, and until men shall learn to make these the sole foundation of their opinions, their opinions will continue to be the same shifting, vacillating, unsubstantial wreaths of smoke which they have ever been.

## CHAPTER X.

## ABSTRACT IDEAS.

THE object of Horne Tooke's great work was to show the absurdity of the doctrine of abstract ideas. He could not, of course, prove by direct proof, that there are no such things as abstract ideas; for no man can prove a negation. For instance, if you choose to assert that there is, at this moment, a horrible monster standing at my right hand, with eyes considerably larger than tea saucers, a mouth like a baker's oven, and hair erect like the quills of an angry porcupine, I cannot prove the contrary. I can only make the counter assertion that I cannot see it, nor feel it; and that the supposition of the presence of such a monster is contrary to common sense. The *onus probandi* then falls on you. It is for *you* to prove the presence of the monster—not for me to disprove it—for to require me to do that, is to require me to perform an acknowledged impossibility—that is, to prove a negation. I can easily prove the foolish absurdity of the assertion—but I cannot disprove its truth.

If you choose to assert that a steam-engine can think, I cannot disprove the assertion. I can only show that such an assertion is wholly gratuitous—that there is no evidence of the fact—and that the supposition is ridiculous. I can take you to see a steam-engine in full operation, and account to you for all its movements. I can point out to you the particular purpose of every screw, wheel, and other lever. I can show you how the formation of each is adapted to the fulfilment of those purposes. I can account to you clearly for the existence of every part of the machine, describe to you why each part exists as we see it, and show you how the machine must necessarily be imperfect

without it. I can also show you that all the operations which have ever yet been performed by a steam-engine, can be readily accounted for without supposing it to possess any such faculty as that of thinking.

But, when I have done this, if you choose still to persist in asserting your belief that a steam-engine can think, I can do no more. I have shown that there is no evidence of such faculty—I have shown that such faculty is wholly *unnecessary* in order to account for any of the operations of a steam-engine. The onus probandi, therefore, rests wholly with you. It is for you to bring in evidence of the fact—to show me some operation of the steam-engine which cannot be performed without the supposition of a thinking faculty—or to point out to me some wheel or screw whose existence would seem to be without an adequate object unless we supposed the machine to possess the faculty in question.

It is the same with man. If you choose still to assert your belief that man possesses something or other which no other animal does, and which you choose still to call mind—and that he can do a something or other (besides talking) which no other animal can do, and which you choose still to call thinking—I cannot prove the contrary with regard to man any more than I can with regard to a steam-engine. I have shown what the word *mind* really means, and what the word *think* really means—I have shown what these words were invented for the purpose of expressing, how and why they were formed, and what office they serve in language; and that the meaning which you impose upon them is one not naturally belonging to them, but entirely forced and arbitrary, and wholly unsupported by etymology, analogy, or any other the slightest show of reason or necessity. I have shown that speech and those senses which we possess in common with other animals, are of themselves fully sufficient to account (together with the organization of man's hand, and a somewhat more elaborate construction, perhaps, of brain—but without any additional sense or faculty whatever)—I say I have shown that these alone are amply sufficient to account for whatever has yet been done by man—that, therefore, the supposition of any other faculty is a perfectly gratuitous supposition—that



there is no tittle of evidence of the fact—and that it is, moreover, contrary to the information of our senses. I have shown, moreover, that such a supposition involves us in a ridiculous, mystical, contradictory, incomprehensible philosophy, which has hitherto served no other purpose than of involving men in endless brawling disputes, which can never by any possibility be settled, because unsusceptible of any kind of proof. While the rejection of so unnecessary and unsupported a supposition dispels at once the cloud of metaphysical disputation on these two heads—mind and thinking—and makes all clear and intelligible, without any dispute of any kind. For all men, without argument, are as conscious that they can talk and remember as they are that they can walk and see the road before them.

If, however, you choose still to maintain the supposition, I cannot disprove it further than I have done—that is, further than showing that it is unnecessary and contrary to common sense. Which amounts to this—that whatever arguments can be brought to prove that a steam-engine cannot think, can also be brought to prove that man cannot think—that is, in your sense of the word. And finally, that there is as much reason to believe a steam-engine can think, as that a man can think—once more, in your sense of the word. It will not serve your turn at all to say that a steam-engine is made of inorganic matter and a man of living matter. This argument will not prove that a steam-engine cannot think; for nothing can prove a negation. It is only efficacious to prove that the supposition that a steam-engine can think is gratuitous and contrary to common sense; and is therefore equally available to prove that man cannot think. The force of whatever arguments can be brought against the supposition that a steam-engine can think, must in every instance resolve itself into the fact, that such a supposition is unnecessary and without evidence. And I have shown that such a supposition with regard to man is equally unnecessary and without evidence.

I intend this as an answer to those who, I know, will be ready to cry out—“that because mind signifies *that which is remembered*, and to think signifies to talk, it is no proof whatever that there may not be a separate being which also goes by the name

of mind, and also a faculty, distinct from talking or remembering, which goes by the name of thinking." Which amounts simply to this—that I have not performed an acknowledged impossibility—that my arguments have not proved a negation—a negation of mind and thinking, distinct from matter, remembering, and talking. Why, I know that as well as they—I have merely proved that the assumption of them is absurd and unnecessary.

Now this is exactly the sort of argument which Horne Tooke used with regard to the childish doctrine of abstract ideas. He took language to pieces, just as you might take any complicated machine to pieces. He clearly pointed out to mankind the uses of every individual part—he showed how they operated all together—explained the great importance of every contrivance—and demonstrated how defective the whole machine would be without them.

When he arrived at those words which are *supposed* to be the names of abstract ideas, he showed the absurdity of this *supposition* by showing its gratuity—by showing that such a supposition was not at all necessary in order to account for the existence of those words. He showed that these words were mere contrivances of language—he showed also the great necessity of such contrivances—and how extremely defective, and indeed wholly inadequate to our wants, language would be without them. Before Horne Tooke's time, when any one denied the existence of abstract ideas, those who favoured the doctrine triumphantly inquired: "then how came we by those words which we call the names of abstract ideas?" Horne Tooke answered the question. He proved to demonstration how we came by them. He showed irrefragably, and with the most wonderful distinctness, and perspicuity, and astonishing perspicacity, the offices which these words perform in language, and also the necessity which exists that there should be such words in order to fulfil these very offices which he proved they *do* fulfil.

In doing this, he left abstraction, as it were, without a house to lodge in—nay, without even a peg to hang his hat upon. There was, before Horne Tooke's time, as it were, a mansion in language without an occupier. Into this mansion metaphysical

philosophers inducted this monster called abstraction, rather than allow the house to remain empty. But Horne Tooke brought home the true proprietor, and turned abstraction out of doors, who instantly vanished, like an eastern genie, in a cloud of smoke—and thus proved himself an impostor. The only purpose which abstraction served was to occupy an empty house. But the proprietor now occupies his own house, and there is therefore no longer any occasion for abstraction.

If you can understand this clumsy allegory you will easily comprehend the nature of Horne Tooke's evidence against the doctrine of abstract ideas. It consists in showing that there is nothing in the nature of language or things to make the doctrine of abstraction necessary—that it answers no purpose—has no object—is utterly useless—and that we can understand everything within the scope of understanding perfectly well without it.

And lastly, that the doctrine itself is wholly incomprehensible, nonsensical, and directly opposed to the evidence of our senses.

All those words which were formerly supposed to be the names of abstract ideas are merely abbreviations in language for the sake of dispatch—abbreviations so necessary to a cultivated people that they could scarcely have become cultivated, to any great extent, without them.

I will now show you—I beg the Spectator's pardon—*attempt* to show you, the uses of these abbreviated forms of speech, and the reason of their introduction into the languages of all civilized communities.

The greater part of all polished languages consist of single words which stand as the signs of whole sentences, just as short hand consists of single marks which stand as the signs of whole words. And as the marks used in short hand are not the direct signs of ideas, but only the signs of words, so those words called abstract nouns, as mind, sensation, &c., are not the names of ideas, but only abbreviated signs standing as the symbols of several other words.

Civilized language owes the whole of its superior power over barbaric languages to these abbreviated signs; just as algebra



owes the whole of its superior power over every other mode of computation to the same system of abbreviated signs carried to a *still greater extent*.

You must here allow me to read to you a very few sentences from Darley's system of algebra, on the use and importance of algebraical symbols, as they will afford a very beautiful and clear illustration of the use and importance to language of those abbreviated symbols of other words, called abstract nouns.

"Suppose," says Mr. Darley, "we had to write down the words *hundred, thousand, hundred-thousand*; would it not be shorter to write them thus, *hund., thou., hund.-thoud.*?—certainly. Therefore it would be shorter still to write them thus, *hd., thd., hd.-thd.*—and much shorter to write them thus, *h, th, h-th.*—and a yet further degree of shortness to write them thus *h, t, h-t*, standing respectively for *hundred, thousand, hundred-thousand*.

In the same manner, if we supposed *a* to stand for any number, say 25; *b* for any other number, 297; *c* for any other, 4000; and so on, it would be shorter to write down *a, b, c, &c.*, than 25, 297, 4000, &c.

When a person, ignorant of algebra, opens an algebraical work, he is astonished, confounded, excited, either to contempt or disgust, by the strange assemblage of *a's, b's, x's, y's*, and other letters of the alphabet, of which he can neither divine the meaning nor suspect the utility. Here is the solution of the mystery—here the explanation of the use. These letters which he sees, apparently jumbled together, stand simply for *numbers*.

Now this is precisely the case with language—and this the doctrine which Horne Tooke taught. What Mr. Darley has here said with regard to algebraical signs and symbols, may be applied, almost word for word, to language—as thus: "When a person, ignorant of *the nature of language*, opens a work on moral or political philosophy, or metaphysics, he is astonished, confounded, excited, either to disgust or contempt, by the strange assemblage of words of which he can neither divine the meaning nor suspect the utility. Here is the solution of the mystery—here the explanation of the use. These words stand simply for other words." If, therefore, you would

come at their meaning, you must translate them into *the words which they stand for*.

Mr. Darley proceeds: "if it be asked—why not use the numbers themselves?—it is briefly answered—because the letters are shorter even than these. For example: suppose we were to divide a hundred-thousand by twenty-five. How should we write this down in numbers?—thus: 25)100,000(4000. How should we write it down in letters?—thus (using those above) *a)ht.(c*.

If it were but for the saving of time, trouble, and stationery, is not the latter method of notation preferable?

Sometimes, however, it might be convenient to use numbers *as well* as letters in computation: thus, if *a* stood for a thousand, 5 *a* would express five thousand.

"Algebra is, therefore," proceeds Mr. Darley, "computation performed by *letters* which stand for *numbers*"—and language, say I, is communication performed by single words which stand for whole sentences. Thus, as *a* may stand for the number 1000, so the single word *mind* stands for the whole sentence, *that which is remembered*. And if you want to know the meaning of *a*, you must ascertain what those thousand things are which are represented by the figures 1000. If they be potatoes, then *a* means 1000 potatoes. So, if you want to know the meaning of the word *mind*—that is, if you want to know what *mind* is—you must ascertain what those things are *which are remembered*—and whatever they are, they, collectively, constitute *mind*. If it were possible that all a man could remember were a thousand potatoes, then the word *mind*, as applied to that man, would mean a thousand potatoes, and a thousand potatoes would constitute that man's *mind*. Mr. Darley proceeds; and I beg of you to pay great attention to this. "Readers will observe, however, that, in algebra, the *same letters* do not always stand for the *same numbers*; but merely, for the *same numbers* in the *same calculation*. Thus, 25 always stands for *twenty-five*, but *a* may be supposed to stand for any different numbers, that is, in *different calculations*. Here is another advantage of notation by letters over that by numbers; it would be productive of great confusion—if, in computing, we were to make 25

stand for any other number; but a letter, having no precise signification, may represent anything whatever without inconvenience. So that the use of numbers is *confined*, while that of letters is almost wholly unrestricted." What a simple and true and beautiful illustration of the nature and use of abstract nouns this is! Let us again apply this, Mr. Darley's illustration of the use of algebraical abbreviations, to the abbreviations of language. Almost the very same words will do again. "Readers will observe, however, that in language the *same words* (abstract nouns) do not always stand for the same *things*; but only for the same things in the same argument. In the following, and such phrases—"I have received a transmission through the post"—the word *transmission* always stands for the sentence "*that which has been sent through.*" But as the sentence, "*that which has been sent through,*" has no precise signification, but may refer to anything whatever which have been sent through some means or other, therefore the word *transmission*, although it always means "*that which has been sent through,*" may yet represent anything whatever, provided only it be *something which has been sent through something else*. Here, then, is another advantage of a language possessing these abbreviated forms of speech, over one which has them not. It would be productive of great confusion if, in conversation, we were to make words which are the direct signs of things—as table, carpet, house, horse, stand sometimes for one thing and sometimes for another; but an abbreviated form of speech—an abstract noun, as it is foolishly called—like the word *transmission*, not denoting any specific, sensible object, except the words of which it is the symbol, may represent anything whatever, without inconvenience, provided only it be something which has been sent through something else. So that a language without these abbreviations is confined, while that which possesses them is almost wholly unrestricted." I might easily, and very properly, carry out the parallel still more minutely. For as the algebraical letters *a, b, c,* are but abbreviated signs representing any number, as 100, 2000, &c.—so these 100, 2000, &c. are themselves only abbreviated signs of the words *one hundred, two thousand, &c.* And so also, as the word *transmission* is only an abbreviated sign,



representing the sentence, “that which has been sent through”—in like manner the sentence, “that which has been sent through,” is itself only an abbreviated form of speech. For in this sentence the word *that* is only an abbreviated sign of the name of the thing sent, whatever it happen to be—say a letter. And the word *sent* is also only an abbreviated sign of all those words which would be necessary to detail the various operations concerned in the process of sending a letter—such as delivering the letter to the bearer, the motions performed by the bearer in receiving and carrying off the letter, &c., &c.

Mr. Darley proceeds: “the whole power of computation may be said to lie in *the brevity of its language*, and to be apportioned thereto. Algebra, for instance, uses a shorter language than arithmetic, and is proportionally a more powerful species of computation.” All this applies exactly to language, thus: “the whole power of language may be said to lie in the brevity of its forms of expression, and to be apportioned thereto. A cultivated language, for instance, uses a shorter form of expression than a barbaric one, and is proportionally a more powerful medium of communication.” Mr. Darley again—“independent, however, of the acquisition of *power*, convenience alone would dictate the utility of an abbreviated language in every science.” This is perfectly true—as true with regard to cultivated language in general, as with regard to the language of science only. For as, in the science of astronomy, it furnishes us with such words as gravitation, culminating, apogee, perigee—in chemistry, with affinity, oxygen, hydrogen, binary, ternary, &c.—in anatomy, with cribriform, xiphoid, &c., &c. ad infinitum—so, in ordinary conversation, it furnishes us with such words as station, motion, action, conversation, virtue, vice, right, wrong, &c. &c. ad infinitum iterum.

Mr. Darley goes on: “thus, in ordinary language, the following statement, *five added to nine is equal to fourteen*, is sufficiently tedious. In common arithmetic it would be more briefly written, *5 added to 9 is equal to 14*. But it may be still more briefly expressed by putting some mark for the words “is equal to,” and also another for the words “added to.” Suppose we put two short parallel lines = for the first, and a cross

+ for the second; then the statement would take this most concise form,  $5 + 9 = 14$ . Now such, in fact, are the marks used throughout algebra for the above words or ideas." Now to apply all this to language: "thus, in a language not highly cultivated, the following statement, "I have received a something which was sent to me by the men employed by the government to carry things from people living in one part of the kingdom to people living in another"—is sufficiently tedious. How much more conveniently may this be expressed by putting some single word for the sentence "a something which was sent to me by;" and also another for the sentence "the men employed by government to carry things from people living in one part of the kingdom to people living in another." Suppose we put the single word *transmission* for the first sentence, and the single word *post* for the second. Then the statement would take this most concise form—"I have received a *transmission by post*." Here you see the one word *transmission* represents the whole sentence, "*a something which has been sent to me by*." And the single word *post*, consisting of but four letters, represents the whole sentence, "the men employed by government to carry things from people living in one part of the kingdom to people living in another." The condensation of power, you cannot help observing, is astonishingly great.

Now then, if you have been able to follow this parallel, you will instantly perceive that the question, "what is transmission?" is just as absurd as the question, "what is *a*?" would be. For as *a* is only the sign of certain figures, say 372; and as these figures may be the sign of anything whatever; it is perfectly clear that I cannot tell you what *a* is or means, until you have told me what figures it stands for; nor can I tell you even then, until you have told me the *particular names* of the things which the *figures* stand for. But if you tell me that the figures stand for horses, then *a* signifies 372 horses. And, in like manner, as the word *transmission* is only the sign of certain *other words*, say, "that which has been sent;" and as these other words may refer to anything whatever, provided only it be "something sent," it is perfectly manifest that I cannot tell you what *transmission* is or means, until you have told me what

are the other words which it stands for; nor even then, until you have also told me the particular name or names of the thing or things to which those *other words* refer. But if you tell me that those *other words* refer to a letter received by post, then the word *transmission* signifies a letter *received by post*.

"I have received a transmission by post." What are you the wiser for this information? Extremely little. For all that you know is, that I have received *something* by post. But what? You cannot tell. It may be a letter—a bank note—a blank envelope—a watch ribbon.

From all this it is broadly manifest that general terms are not the signs of ideas—that nothing can be the signs of ideas but particular names, of which general terms are but the abbreviated signs, resorted to for the sake of dispatch and convenience, like the algebraical signs  $a$ ,  $b$ ,  $c$ — $x$ ,  $y$ ,  $z$ .

I have already shown you that the question, "what is transmission?" is as justly absurd as the question, what is  $a$ ? would be. And the questions—what is mind?—what is sensation?—what is honor?—are, of course, just as absurd as the question, "what is transmission?" and for precisely the same reason. For these are all general terms—abbreviated symbols of other words—as  $a$ ,  $b$ ,  $c$ , are the algebraical symbols of numbers—and I cannot answer the questions until these symbols have been translated into *the words which they stand for*.

The word *honor*, therefore, like the word *transmission*, has no meaning at all, until he who uses it has told us of what other words he makes the word *honor* the symbol.

What, then, is honor? The question is foolish, futile, without significancy. It is  $a$ , or  $b$ , or  $c$ —a mere sound vacant of all meaning, and only waiting in readiness to receive any meaning with which he who uses it may choose to invest it. It is a mere symbol which any man may take, and, in his conversation or writings, make it stand for whatever sentence he pleases. The peasant makes it stand for one set of words, the city tradesman for another, the aristocrat for a third. With the one it stands for punctuality in meeting all payments. With the aristocrat, for readiness to go out to fight on receiving an insult. That *combination of letters* forming the word honor is



a symbol which every man may use as he pleases, and make stand for whatever *combination of words* he pleases—just as the algebraist may take the letter *a* and make it stand for whatever *combination of numbers* he pleases. But the algebraist, having once determined what particular number it shall stand for in *that calculation*, must continue to make it stand for that same number throughout the whole of that same process of computation. Otherwise all will be confusion and error, and he can arrive at no result. And so a man in writing on any one subject, having once determined on what other words he will make the word honor stand for, must continue to make it stand for those same words all through his reasonings on that same subject. Otherwise, all will be confusion and error, and he can work out no result, nor make himself understood.

At the commencement of every algebraical operation, the operator states the numbers for which, all through the operation, he intends to make each particular letter stand. He then works on unerringly to a sure result. And it is because philosophers do not do this with regard to the symbols of language, from their absurdly supposing that all men use the same symbols to stand for the same combinations of words—and because they do not themselves even make the same symbols stand for the same combination of words throughout the whole of the same argument—which has been productive of so much inextricable philosophical confusion. It would be very troublesome, however, to preface every work with an explanation of the symbols used all through the book. And yet it is perfectly impossible for any philosophical work to be intelligible unless this be done, at least with regard to all the important words bearing more immediately on the subject; or else, unless every important word be used strictly in its etymological sense.

Language has this important superiority over computation by algebraical signs. In the letters *a*, *b*, *c*, there is nothing whatever to show the reader what they stand for—and therefore it is, that it is necessary, at the outset of every operation, to *state* what they stand for. But, in the symbols of language, there *is* a very manifest something which can always show the reader what each one stands for, provided men will only use

them to stand for those words or sentences, in order to stand for which they were expressly invented. If they would do this, there would be no necessity to define them at the outset of a work. There is in each of these symbolical words a meaning which the very formation of the word makes inherent and visible in the word itself. Why not always use the signs accordingly with these their natural meanings? I mean, of course, in all important philosophical arguments. There are some, it is true, whose etymologies have been lost. With regard to such, the first time one of these occurs, the writer or speaker should explain the words which he makes that sign stand for, and then continue to use it in that sense solely throughout the whole of that particular argument. What infinite confusion and interminable disputations would this avoid! How easy would it render the detection of error! And how difficult (almost impossible) would it then be for writers to deceive either themselves or their readers! Bound down by the strong fetters of a *fixed definition*, which must stand unalterable throughout the whole of that argument, all the tortuosities of sophistry, the crooked paths of a false logic, and the shifting and shadowy colouring and changes of phraseology, and the shading off and imperceptible sliding of one meaning into another, could no longer avail—and nothing would be left to the reasoner, but to pursue, like the algebraist, a straight path to an inevitable result—whether that result were such as he expected or not.

When a man is reading, there is constantly going on within him a rapid process of translation. He translates, as he goes along, these abbreviated symbols, of which I am speaking, into that which they stand for in his *own mind*. But these symbols are intended to convey that which they stand for in the *mind of the writer*! But this the reader cannot, by any possibility, know—otherwise than by *guessing* from the nature of the context. When a man meets with the word right, he translates it into that which it stands for in his own mind. But there is no possibility of knowing whether or not it stands for the same things in the mind of him who wrote the word—and this happens for want of a common standard by which the meanings

of such symbols may be regulated. Such a common standard is to be found in etymology and in etymology alone—which stamps each of these symbols with one uniform and visible meaning.

It is no objection to this to say that the majority of readers do not understand etymology. If they do not understand the language in which they converse, they have no business either to argue in it, or to presume to judge of the arguments of others. If they do not understand their mother tongue, let them study it till they do, and refrain from taking part in any kind of argument until they have done so. Surely it cannot be thought too much to require that a man should understand the language in which he writes or speaks! or the language of those books which he reads for instruction! But besides this, does he understand them as it is? No—the only difference is this—*now it is not possible* to understand them—while, in the case supposed, it would be not only possible, but extremely easy—nothing more being necessary than that every Englishman who writes, or reasons, or reads the reasonings of other Englishmen, should understand the English language! Is this too much to require? And is any man fit to argue, or to read the arguments of another, who does not understand the language in which the arguments are conducted? Or if he *do* read and argue without understanding the language which he uses and reads, can he possibly profit himself or others? This difficulty about etymology is a mere bugbear, for if the spelling-books of schools, and the common dictionaries, would be content to give all the known and unquestionable etymologies of words *as the meanings of those words*, instead of committing that stupid and really idiot error of attempting to explain one symbol by another symbol, only because different authors have chosen to use the same symbols indifferently as the signs of different things—just as one algebraist may use *a* to express the number 100, and another may use the same letter to express the number 313—the difficulty would disappear at once. But dictionary-makers, instead of interpreting these symbols into the words which they stand for etymologically, only tell us that Mr. So and So used this symbol instead of such and such other symbol; and



Mr. Somebody else used it in the place of such and such another symbol. This is as though the author of a dictionary of algebraical signs and symbols should say that *a* sometimes means *b*, only because he has discovered that some algebraists use *a* to denote 100, while others use *b* to denote the same number. *A*, says he, (under the head of *a*) means *b*—and *b*, says he, (under the head of *b*) means *a*. Lucid expositor! *Right*, says Dr. S. Johnson, (under the head of *right*) means *not wrong*—and *wrong*, says he, (under the head of *wrong*) means *not right*. Admirable lexicographer!

It is true that, if it should once become the fashion to listen to no argument, and to read no book but such as are couched in an intelligible language, the whole class of half-educated men would be excluded from the arena of argumentation. But as those who talk in a language which they do not understand can but brawl, and bandy words, and “gabble like things most brutish,” what possible benefit can accrue either to themselves or others by admitting them into the field of dispute? Whoso desires to enter that field, let him qualify himself to do so.

But if an author desire to write so as to be intelligible to all classes, *whether educated or not*, I say he may do so in matters of general philosophy, as I have already said he may do in the more exact sciences. And this is only to be achieved by abolishing as much as possible the use of these abbreviated symbols altogether, and using no important words but such as are the direct signs of ideas. This will compel him to speak nothing but common sense—which is level with the capacity of all mankind.

But if it be thought too much to require that a man who *talks* English should *understand* English—then in all important reasonings let it become the practice to set down at the beginning, accordingly with the advice of Lord Bacon and John Locke, clear and succinct definitions of all those words whose sense is necessary to make the argument intelligible.

I need not say that all this does not apply to mere chit-chat conversation, nor to books whose sole object is amusement. Though it would certainly be better to talk correctly even on these occasions.

But there are some few important words whose etymologies may not be manifest. When these words become the subject of argument, a clear definition of the sense in which the author uses them should be given.

I am now about to show you some of the absurdities which have arisen from not understanding the true use of these symbolical abbreviations, and to explain shortly their nature, and the purpose which they serve in language. A very large number of them are borrowed from the Latin and Greek—partly because those languages are more ductile, more easily moulded into different forms of speech, than ours—and partly from the convenient cloak which they afford wherewith to conceal from the ignorant and incurious the no-meaning of certain writers and speakers—and in order to invest the domain of sophistry with a fogginess of atmosphere that may serve to conceal the nakedness of the land.

Now then for our abstract ideas.

Amongst those words which are said to be the names of abstract ideas, are those denoting what are called the *qualities* of bodies. Quality, therefore, is said to be one of these same abstract ideas. Let us see whether we can find it.

The first thing to be done is to ascertain to what language the word quality belongs, and then to translate it into an exactly equivalent one in our own tongue. It is a Latin word—and the English words which exactly answer to it are *howness*, *whatness*, or *what-sort-of-a-thing-ness*—which words, (although the last, I confess, is neither very elegant nor convenient) no man dare deny to be as strictly and properly English words, and manufactured according to as strict an analogy, as any one word ending in *ness* throughout the whole range of the English language. And even the last, harshly as it will sound to modern ears, and consisting as it does of six different words strung together, and the whole made into one noun substantive by the addition of the termination *ness*, is formed exactly on the same principle on which numbers of other words are formed, both in modern and ancient English—that is, Anglo-Saxon—viz., by stringing a number of words together, and making the whole into one word by adding a terminating syllable. Thus, we get

the modern word *præantepenultimate*—that is, *præ-ante-pen-ultimate*—and thus was made the Anglo-Saxon word *gemindiglicnys*—that is, *ge-min-'d-ig-lic-nys*. The only reason, therefore, why my new word *whatsortofathingness* seems strange and awkward is merely because it has never been adopted, the Latin word quality having been borrowed to supply its place, as being more neat and brief.

The feminine ablative of the Latin pronoun *qui*, is *qua*, and signifies by *what means*, in *what manner*, of *what sort*, or *what sort of a thing*. But they wanted, for the convenience of diction, to express these same ideas in the form of an adjective. So they tacked the termination *lis* to the end of *qua*, and thus got the adjective *qualis*, still signifying of *what sort*, but with a termination which showed that it was intended to be joined to another word, just as we add the termination *en* to the word gold, in order to show that the word gold is to be added to some other word—as, a golden cross—indicating that the idea represented by the word gold is to be added to the idea represented by the word cross.

Having thus made an adjective out of the pronoun, they then proceeded, for a similar convenience of diction, to make a noun out of the adjective, by once more changing the termination; and thus they got the noun *qualitas*; which we, by once more changing the termination, made into the English noun *quality*. But it is quite self-evident that the mere addition of a termination to a word can subtract nothing from the meaning of that word. The addition of *en* can surely subtract nothing from the meaning of the word gold! Neither can the addition of *lis* to the pronoun *qua* subtract anything from the meaning of *qua*, which is, of *what sort*, or *what sort of a thing*. The adjective *qualis*, therefore, is still only the pronoun *qua* altered in form, and still continues to convey the same meaning.

“Tale tuum carmen nobis, divine poëta,

Quale sopor fessis in gramine, quale per æstum

Dulcis aquæ saliente sitim restinguere rivo.”—Virg. Ecl. 5.

That is—*what sort of a thing* sleep is to weary men stretched on the grass—*what sort of a thing* it is, on a hot summer's day, to quench one's thirst at a leaping river of sweet water—that sort



of a thing, O divine poet, is thy verse to me. That is, the effect of thy verse on me is *like*—that is, is of the *same sort* as—that is, as sweet and refreshing as—sleep to the weary, or fresh water to the thirsty.

The same meaning precisely, you will perceive, still adheres to the adjective which was inherent in its root, the pronoun *qua*; and that the alteration in the form of the word, from the form of pronoun to the form of adjective, does nothing more than enable us to express the same ideas in a variety of ways, for the mere convenience of diction.

Of the adjective *qualis*, they made the adverb *qualiter*, which signifies after *what sort*, and *qualitercunque*, after *what-sort-soever*, and *qualitas*, which signifies *what-sort-ness*, or *what-sort-of-a-thing-ness*, or, as we more neatly express it, *quality*.

I will now show you that my new word *what-sort-of-a-thing-ness* is perfectly capable of supplying the place of our modern Latin-English word *quality*.

—“*What sort of thing* is that horse you bought yesterday?” “He is lame in the off-shoulder, blind of the off-eye, and has corns on his near fore-foot.” “It serves you right. You should have ascertained the *what-sort-of-thing-ness* of the brute before you paid for him.” Would not any clown in christendom understand this language, as well, nay better, than the word *quality*? I maintain that the word *what-sort-of-thing-ness* is, in every respect, the exact, and proper, and literal English translation of the Latin word *quality*, and that whatever ideas are expressed by the one word are also contained in the other, and that if the word *quality* be the name of one single, abstract idea, so also is the word *what-sort-of-thing-ness*—the two words being no more than a literal translation one of the other. But the word *what-sort-of-thing-ness* is not a word, but a sentence; and cannot therefore be the sign of any isolated idea, but of several ideas. And I, moreover, say that, wherever the word *quality* is used, it is merely a symbol, adopted for the sake of brevity, and stands for the whole sentence above mentioned, just as *a* may be made, by an algebraist, to stand for the figures 2470. And that in order to understand the meaning of the word *quality*, it must be translated into the words *which it stands*

*for*—as the sign *a*, before it can be understood, must be translated into the *figures* which it *stands for*. And that when the word quality is so used that it cannot bear this translation into the words which it stands for so as to make sense, then it has received an arbitrary meaning from him who has so used it, which arbitrary meaning the word is incapable of communicating to the mind of another, and thus has lost its power and utility as a word.

To show you the manner in which words are formed, I will give you a familiar instance or two. I will take two from Shakspeare. In his play of Macbeth occur these lines :

“Which often, since my **HERE-REMAIN** in England,  
I have seen him do.”

And again—

“Whither, indeed, before thy **HERE-APPROACH**,  
Old Siward, with ten thousand warlike men,  
All ready at a point, was setting forth.”

Now is it not perfectly clear that had these two words, the adverb *here* and the verb *remain*, which Shakspeare, by a hyphen, has made into a noun, been taken from a foreign language, so that the *separate* meaning of *each word* was not recognised—is it not clear, I say, that this noun *here-remain* would have taken its place (and indeed I see not how it is to escape even now) among abstract nouns, and so have been said to be the sign of an abstract idea? Let us see if we cannot coin this word *here-remain*, by help of the Latin language, into a neater kind of word, and one too which shall be perfectly analogous to scores of others already coined in the same manner from the same language. When I have done this, you will perceive in a moment, how liable we shall be, if we don't mind, to be all at once cheated of its true meaning—only by having the dust of a foreign language thrown in our eyes.

Our word *permanence* is made of the Latin preposition *per*, which signifies through, and *manens*, which is the present participle of the Latin word *maneo*, which signifies, *I remain*. *Permanens*, or, as we write it in English, *permanence*, therefore, signifies *remaining through*—that is, through time. Now the Latin adverb answering to our adverb *here*, is *hic*. By taking

therefore, (as in the case of the word permanence) the Latin word *manens*, which I have just said signifies remaining, and placing before it the Latin word *hic*—here—instead of the Latin word *per*—through—we shall thus get Shakspeare's noun *here-remain* translated into Latin, and thus acquire a new word, made on the model of our common word permanence, and, in all respects, just as good. The word will be *hic-manens* or *hic-manence*, and will be merely the English word *here-remain* clothed in a Latin tunic. But is it possible to conceive that Shakspeare's good English noun *here-remain* can have lost any part of its meaning by having been thus smuggled and metamorphosed out of one language into another? Can any sensible and thoughtful man suffer himself to be hocus-pocus'd out of his senses after this fashion? And surely it is equally clear that if, by thus lifting an English noun out of the English language into the Latin language, the word still retains its English meaning; so also the merely lifting a Latin noun, like *qualitas*, out of the Latin language into the English, can work no alteration whatever in its signification.

I will now just give you one instance of the manner in which we are daily in the habit of making and using *adjectives* without knowing it. In a newspaper, the other day, I met with this advertisement, than the style of which nothing can be more frequent. "The Licensed Victualler's and general *Fire and Life Assurance* Company, having effected an arrangement with the British and Colonial Life Assurance and Trust Society, the business of the two offices will, for the future, be conducted under one *management*." Now here the words "*Fire-and-Life-Assurance*" are all strung together, and do, in fact, form one adjective, which is coupled with the noun company, just as any other adjective might be, and for the same purpose, viz. of joining certain ideas of things with certain other ideas of other things. As this adjective stands (fire-and-life-assurance) in plain, broad, naked English, no one can doubt that it is the sign of several ideas of things—although, before Horne Tooke's time, it was denied, and sworn to, that adjectives were not and could not be the signs of the ideas of things—and all sorts of the most abominable trash, by such men as Mr. Harris, were



written about them, to try and make intelligible to others that which was wholly unintelligible to themselves—just as men are still labouring to make intelligible to others their notions about the meaning of such words as justice, right, mind, moral dignity, intellectual elevation, and such like, but which they can never succeed in doing, because they do not understand themselves—but, I say, by means of a little hocus-pocus, I can conjure this awkward word “fire-and-life-assurance” into a very decent English word, and having so close a resemblance to other English adjectives in ordinary use, that such philosophers as Mr. Harris, my Lord Brougham, and the Spectator, might be very easily persuaded to believe that it was not the sign of any ideas whatever. Let us see. The Latin for fire is *ignis*—for life, *vita*—and to make firm and secure—that is, to *assure*—is, in Latin, *affirmare*. All these stitched neatly together will make a very pretty English adjective, as thus—*ignivitaaffirmative*. We have *affirmative* already. And why not *vitaaffirmative*? And if this be allowed (and it is impossible, with any show of reason, to disallow it) then why not also *ignivitaaffirmative*? Now here, you see, when the English adjective has endued the Latin tunic, we are in great danger of losing its meaning altogether. And if it be necessary to look sharp into the nature and formation of this word in order to ascertain its meaning, and make it a useful word, and to prevent us from falling into the error of supposing that the word is not expressive of any definite ideas, so also must it be equally necessary with regard to all other words whatever. And if the looking into the nature and formation of this one word is sufficient to secure us from all error, and to make the word a useful and intelligible and unmistakable sign of certain definite ideas, the same habit will afford us an equal security with regard to every other word.

Now, you know, by adding the termination *ness* to the adjective talkative, we get the abstract noun talkativeness—to sublime, sublimeness—to philoprogenitive, philoprogenitiveness—to restive, restiveness—to submissive, submissiveness, &c.—therefore by adding the same termination *ness* to our new adjective *ignivitaaffirmative*, we shall get the abstract noun *ignivitaaffirmativeness*. Now scholars—that is, such scholars as he of

the Spectator—may tell us, if they please, that this word is the name of an abstract idea. But I say it is the sign of the English words *fire and life assurance*.

The members of the House of Commons are rare hands at the manufacture of new adjectives. Thus they give us—the (*Catholic-emancipation*) bill—the (*municipal-corporations*) bill—the (*abolition-of-imprisonment-for-debt*) bill. I wish they would give us one more, and call it the (*provision-of-abstract-philosophers-with common-sense*) bill.

But the advertisement before-mentioned concludes thus: “the business of the two offices will for the future be conducted under *one management*.” Now, because the adjective *one* is applied to the word management, they may tell us that the word must be the sign of *one* abstract idea. But I say it is the sign or symbol of all the names of the directors, clerks, collectors, &c. &c. who carry on the business of the before-mentioned two companies. As *a* may be the sign of some dozen or score of figures, which figures are the sign of some dozen or score of things, so *management* is the sign of the names of the directors, clerks, &c. which names are the signs of certain particular men who manage the affairs of these companies. A Roman philosopher might as well have asserted that one letter must be half a dozen letters, because the Romans used the *plural* words *unæ literæ* to signify “*one letter*.” We give a plural form to our word *one* as well as the Romans did to their word *unus*. We say: “I have one black hen and half-dozen white—*ones*.” Now the Spectator—

#### B.

Have done with the Spectator! can you never forgive an injury? Let him alone! and quietly “*redeat in nihilum quod fuit ante nihil*.”

#### A.

“*Requiescat in pace*” as the undertakers have it. But he has never injured me—he only *tried* to do it. Have you forgotten the old school pun—“*laudatur ab his! culpatur ab illis?*” True, he called me “self-sufficient sciolist,” and sundry other euphonious appellations “too numerous to mention.” But “hard names break no bones,” and the other periodicals

have not followed his lead. Even the Examiner, having cracked his joke at the beginning of his notice, and scolded me for not having confounded chronology with history, concludes by admitting that my design is good, and that, if I can execute it, I shall do "good service." They have not, I say, followed the Spectator's lead—they have not appreciated his example—they have cruelly

"Left him alone in his glory!"

'Ecce homo,' cries the passer-by—and echo answers, 'Ecce homo!'—which, being translated for the Spectator's special instruction, signifies: "Behold! the man who fished for a flat, and caught a Tartar"—and echo answers, "caught a Tartar!"

B.

You forget the Monthly, which, it is true, we have neither of us seen; but which, I am told, out-spectatored the Spectator.

A.

True—the Monthly I had entirely forgotten. So then there are, not one, but two—"par nobile fratrum"—who aspired to become "Δύω κοσμητορε λαῶν"—which means "two little Davids with two little slings, who aspired to become two little Goliaths"—an attempt in which many a better man than either of them has failed—"many a time and oft."

Nevertheless, I cannot part with my Spectator—he is my symbol—my abstract noun—which you know is the sign of an abstract idea—which is the sign of nothing. The nine letters composing Spectator are to me what the letters of the alphabet are to the algebraist—what the symbols I have been speaking of are to language—what the word *management* is as it stands in the advertisement so often mentioned. That word, you know, is the symbol which stands in the minds of men as the sign of the names of all the gentlemen who conduct the business of the two companies. And Spectator is the symbol which stands in my mind as the sign of all those who—"mistake fustian for philosophy." No—I cannot part with my Spectator.

Thus I have shown you that the word quality is nothing more than the Latin word *qualitas*, and that *qualitas* is nothing more than *quale*, and that *quale* is nothing more than *qua*, the feminine ablative of the Latin pronoun *qui*, and signifies, what sort



of thing, or what manner of thing. I have shown you too the broad and grinning absurdity of supposing that, by merely altering the termination of a word, and lifting it out of one language into another, the meaning of that word can be, in any manner, changed. I have shown you that the same ideas are still clearly expressed, whether we use Shakspeare's English noun "*here-remain*," or whether we use the Latin form *hicmanence*—whether we use the Latin form *permanence*, or the English form, *remaining through time*—whether we use the English form, *Fire and Life Assurance*, or the Latin form *ignivitaaffirmative*. And herein I have proved the extraordinary and grotesque absurdity of the doctrine of abstract ideas. For the very same men who will tell you that the word *permanence* is the name of an abstract idea, dare not, for their lives, deny that *permanence* signifies *remaining through time*, and that *remaining through time* signifies *permanence*. And having thus been compelled to admit that the two forms of speech mutually signify the *same thing*, they then proceed to declare that they signify *different things*, by telling us that the word *permanence* signifies an abstract idea, while the sentence, *remaining through time*, is clearly the sign of all the ideas represented by those three words, whatever they may chance to be. It is the same with quality. No one dare deny that the word *what-sort-of-thing-ness*, however awkward it sounds, is the plain and literal translation of *qualitas*—nor will any one dare deny that *qualitas* and *quality* are one word. Yet, when the *meaning* of *qualitas* (let it be what it will) is expressed by the word *quality*, they call it (the meaning) an abstract idea. But when it (the same meaning) is expressed by the words *what-sort-of-thing-ness*, they are compelled to admit that it (the same meaning, which they before called an abstract idea) is made up of all those ideas which are expressed by all those separate words which compose the noun *what-sort-of-thing-ness*. So again, if the word *ignivitaaffirmativeness* should come to be adopted into the English tongue, as a word of precisely similar structure has been, viz., *philoprogenitiveness*, both words being, in fact, whole sentences, (the one Greek, the other Latin) then, when the meaning of *ignivitaaffirmativeness* (whatever it be) is expressed by this one long word, they would say it is the

name of an abstract idea; but when the same meaning was expressed by the English compound word, or sentence, *Fire and Life Assurance*, then they must perforce admit that it is *not* the sign of an abstract idea—for the word fire, at all events, is certainly the sign of a sensible object.

I have shown you, too, that when a certain meaning, or set of ideas, is IN YOU, which you desire to put into another man, you may either effect your object by using the word *quality*, or *what-sort-of-thing-ness*—proving, beyond the possibility of question, that the two words are two mutually interchangeable signs, both pointing alike to one and the same identical meaning—and that, if *quality* be the name of an abstract idea, so also must the whole sentence *what-sort-of-thing-ness* be the name of an abstract idea—and all the separate words composing it, by merely being strung together, or uttered quickly, one after the other, must have all at once lost their meaning, and ceased, by some unaccountable and mystical operation, to be the signs of any ideas at all.

If, in speaking to you of a horse which I shot, I say: “he was a kicker, a roarer, a crib-biter; he had a quitter, was blind, lame and spavined”—and if I proceed thus: “and I shot him *because* of these bad *qualities*”—is it not perfectly clear that the word *quality* is here used merely to save me the trouble of repeating the words: “he was a kicker, he was a roarer, he was a” &c. Is it not perfectly indifferent to the sense whether I say, “I shot him *because* of these bad *qualities*,” or that I shot him “because he was a kicker, a crib-biter,” &c.? And in telling you that he was a kicker, a roarer, &c., what have I done? Why, I have merely told you to *what sort* of horses he belonged—and that I shot him because it *was* of *that sort*. I have told you that he was *of that sort of horses* who kick, who roar, &c.

“He was a kicker, a roarer, a crib-biter, &c.—had it not been that he was a roarer, a kicker, a crib-biter, &c.—or, possessed these qualities—he would have been a valuable horse; but I think every horse which is a kicker, a roarer, a crib-biter, &c. &c.—or, has these qualities—should be shot. I would on no account either use myself, or sell to another, a horse that was a kicker, a roarer, a crib-biter, &c. &c.—or, had these qualities.”

You may either use the abbreviated symbol, or the sentences which it stands for. It is quite indifferent as to the sense, but by no means so as to convenience and brevity. There are no ideas which we cannot communicate without the use of this word quality, though not so conveniently as with it. When, therefore, we gained the word quality we gained no new idea, but only a shorter and more convenient form of speech, by which to communicate the *same ideas* which we *could* have communicated without it, but only *not so briefly*.

The algebraist makes the letter *a* stand for any number—say ten thousand—and in the sentences about the horse, we make the word quality stand for all the words, “he is a crib-biter,” &c. &c. There is no difference whatever.

I observe on my pencil case the words “Mordan and Co.” Now, what is *Co.*? This is just as sensible a question as “what is quality?” And is just as much the sign of an abstract idea. *Co.* is an abbreviated symbol, and stands for company. The greater part of all polished languages consist of words which are exactly similar to this word *Co.*

If, before this word quality was introduced into our language, and while we had no other *single* word answering to it, we could nevertheless convey *all* the ideas without it which we can now convey by means of it; the sun at noon-day cannot be clearer than that this word quality is not the sign of any idea, but only a symbol of other words. This seems to me to be perfectly unanswerable.

## B.

But have not modern philosophers given up the doctrine of abstract ideas?

## A.

No—they say they have—but they have not. For if they had, how could they go on talking as they do, of the ideas of *thinking*, ideas of *figure*, of *rest*, of *motion*, of *knowing* of *willing*, of *mind*, &c.? They admit that there are no such things as abstract ideas, and then proceed to prate about them as though their existence was unquestionable. They admit the general principle, that there are no such things as abstract ideas, and then deny the several *particulars* of which that general is made



up. They admit that yonder basket is filled with potatoes, and not apples, and then, taking them out one at time, they say, "this is an apple, and that is an apple." In the Rev. E. Bushby's Essay on Mind occurs this passage: "Our idea of solidity is also distinguished from that of *pure space*, which is capable neither of resistance nor motion. We may conceive two bodies approach one another, without touching or displacing any solid thing, till their surfaces meet; and hence we obtain a *clear idea* of space without solidity. *Whether there be such a thing as pure space is a different question*; but that we are able to form an idea of it, cannot be doubted!" p. 6. Few men laugh seldomer than I do—but this is enough to make a very tar-barrel split its sides! He admits that it is doubtful whether there be *any such thing as pure space*! He admits that there may, perhaps, be NO SUCH THING, and then proceeds to declare that there can be no doubt that we can form, not only an idea of it, but a "*clear idea*" of it! What! can we form an idea, clear or not clear, of that which has no existence? An idea of nothing! Why this is abstraction double-distilled! Abstraction run mad! There is no such thing as a blynam—yet, only go to Mr. E. Bushby, B. D., Fellow and Tutor of St. John's College, Cambridge, and he will instruct you how you may form a "*clear idea*" of *it* nevertheless. Of *it*! Of what? Nothing.

Yet, at p. 16, Mr. Bushby says: "It is now generally admitted that the mind has no such power"—as that, viz., of abstraction.

Mr. Bushby admits also that there are no such things as *innate* ideas. But, says he, (following Lord Shaftesbury) there are "ideas which may be said to be *connatural*." That is to say, there are no such things as ideas born *in* us, but there are such things as ideas born *with* us. For *innate* and *connatural* are both parts of the same word *nascor*, to be born. But let Mr. Bushby explain what he means by *connatural*. He says: "that is to say, the constitution of man is such that when he is grown up to the exercise of his reasoning powers, certain ideas will inevitably and necessarily spring up in him. Such are those above mentioned of *existence, personal identity, time, number*."

Mr. Bushby's book purports to be, and is, little more than an abridgment, or rather condensation of Locke; and Locke has said: "We can know nothing further than we have the idea of it; when that is gone, we are in perfect ignorance." What then! has a child no idea, no knowledge, no consciousness of its own existence, till it has "grown up to the exercise of its reasoning faculties?" Does it acquire the knowledge of its own existence by reasoning? Does it not know that it can kick and scream, and see, and feel, and suck; or, in one word, that it lives, until it has *reasoned* itself into that knowledge? If you pinch its ear till it screams, does it not know that it is itself, and not another, that is hurt? If it do not know that it is *itself*, and not another that is hurt, why does *itself* cry, and endeavour to escape from the pain? If it do not know but that it may be somebody else that is hurt, why does it not leave it to somebody else to cry, and to endeavour to escape from the pain? But, says Mr. Bushby, an infant has no idea of existence, nor of personal identity! But who does not clearly perceive that Mr. Bushby can only mean that an infant has no idea of the *word* existence, the *words* personal identity, and the *word* itself. The child does not know those *words*, nor the use and application of those words—but it knows, that is, has the feelings, of which those words are the signs. To *live*, is to perform certain actions—and, in animals, to have sensations—the child knows that it can perform those actions, for it does perform them—and it knows that it has sensations, for it can feel—the only difference is, that the child does not know that all these things go by the names of existence, animal life, &c. It does not know the *words*, truly—but it knows the *things*—as well as the grayest-headed metaphysician of them all! Mr. Bushby mistakes the *word* existence, for existence itself. A dog has a perfectly clear idea of personal identity, for he knows that another dog is not himself, and that he is the same dog to-day that he was yesterday. For, if he did not, he could not profit to-day by the experience of yesterday. Nor would he know to-day, when his master called him by the name by which he called him yesterday, that he was the dog which went by that name. If the dog *Tray* did not know that he was the same dog who

was called Tray yesterday, he could not possibly know that he was the dog that was wanted when his master cried, Tray! to-day. The only difference is, that the dog does not know that the feelings which make him answer to his name are called HAVING AN IDEA OF PERSONAL IDENTITY.

At p. 99, Mr. Bushby says: "if we understand by them (the words *heat* and *color*) some unknown disposition or motion of the insensible particles of bodies, by which the perception of heat or color is caused in us, then fire is hot and grass is green. But if we understand by those words *what we feel* by fire, or *what we see* in grass—in that sense, fire is *not* hot, nor grass green; for the heat we feel, and the colors we see, are *only in the soul*." How! does the fact of fire being hot, and grass green, depend upon what we chose to understand by those words; and not upon their own nature? Will fire cease to be what we now call hot, and grass cease to be what we now call green, whenever we chose to change the sense of those two words? And does the Rev. Mr. Bushby *really mean* that the "heat which" a dog "feels," and the "color which" a dog "sees," is *only* in the dog's "soul?" No—the Rev. Mr. Bushby did not mean that dogs have souls—although he has *distinctly implied so*—and although *they must have souls* if Mr. Bushby's philosophy, as here stated, were true. I only quote the passage, however, to show what sort of "fustian" that is which some men mistake for "philosophy."

We are told that there are two sorts of qualities—primary and secondary. *Solidity*, they say, is one of these primary qualities. It is a primary what-sort-of-thing-ness. Here is a lump of sugar. It possesses now the quality called *solidity*. I pour hot water upon it—heigh presto! *solidity* has made to itself wings and flown away. Where has it flown to? The sugar now possesses a new quality called *fluidity*. Where has it come from? But there was a point of time during the melting of the sugar when it possessed neither *solidity* nor *fluidity*, but only *semi-solidity*. *Solidity* is the very contrary of *fluidity*. *Semi-solidity*, therefore, should be the opposite of *semi-fluidity*. But *semi-solidity* and *semi-fluidity*, although they are the *halves* of opposite things, are, nevertheless, *one and the same thing*



themselves! Bah! the stupid trash is not worth refuting.

There is no such thing as solidity, nor any such thing as fluidity. There are things which we call *solid*, and things which we call *fluid*, and of these things we have ideas. But of solidity and fluidity we have no idea at all. How can we have ideas—that is, knowledge, or consciousness, or recollections of non-existences—that is, of nothings? To have an *idea of nothing*, is to *know nothing*! These words are mere symbols, like *a*, *b*, *c*, *x*, *y*, *z*. Or like the word *Co.*, and stand as so many short-hand marks to represent certain other words—as the mark  $\times$  stands, in algebra, for the words “multiplied by.”

Now observe—“Mr. B. has fallen from his horse and broken his leg.” If you and I were to continue to converse on this matter for an hour, we should not have occasion to repeat the sentence, “Mr. B. has fallen from his horse and broken his leg” more than once. Why? Because to save time and trouble, we should use a symbol in order to represent this whole sentence, as often as we had occasion to refer to it. What would that symbol be? The word *accident*. In our conversation, therefore, what would the word *accident* mean? Why, it would mean, “fallen from his horse and broken his leg,” would it not? The word *accident* is a Latin word, and means *that which has happened*. And what is that which has happened? Answer: “Mr. B. has fallen from his horse and broken his leg.” The word *accident*, standing by itself, means nothing, except the words “*that which has happened*.” And the words “*that which has happened*” mean nothing until we have been *told* what that is which *has happened*. What, then, is *accident*? The question is foolish, and entirely without significance. It is merely a grammatical arrangement of words which do not refer to things. You might as well ask me: what is the color of “God save the King?”—what is *x*? what is *y*? what is *z*? They are merely marks or sounds which we call letters. What is *Co.*? Two letters joined together. What are they for? To express ideas? No—they are short-hand signs which are made to stand for words. Every time you use the phrase, “Mr. B.’s accident,” the only ideas which that phrase brings to my mind, are the ideas of Mr. B. and his broken leg. But

these ideas are not communicated to me *by* the word accident, but, as it were, *through* the word accident, and *by* the words "*Mr. B.*" and "*broken leg,*" contained in the sentence, of which sentence the word accident I know to be the symbol. We have no means (in our own language) of condensing the whole sentence, "*that which has happened,*" into one word. In the Latin tongue we found it already done to our hands; so we took the Latin word *accidens*, changed the final *s* into a *t*, to make it accord with other similar words, and adopted it as the sign of the sentence, "*that which has happened.*" It is true that the word *accidens* is not a *past*, but a *present* participle. The verb to which it belongs *has* no past participle—if it had, we should have taken that past participle—but as it had not, we have taken the *present* participle and made it do duty for a *past* one.

In fact, the substitution of these Latin words for the English words which they stand for, is nothing more than a translation of our own language into the Latin language. And the reason why we do this is, because that language is more concise than ours, and can express in one word as many ideas as would require a whole sentence to express them in English. If, therefore, we would understand the meaning of these Latin words, we must translate them *back again* into English.

Instead of repeating over and over again the words, "*that which has happened,*" we translate them into Latin, because the one Latin word *accident* signifies all that is signified by the English words, "*that which has happened.*"

But to suppose that, by merely translating the words of one language into the words of another, we, in any way, acquire new ideas, or in any manner alter the old ones, is most grossly absurd. Is it not ridiculous, because I choose to translate the English word man into the Latin word *homo*, (which means the same thing) and because I choose to use this Latin word *homo*, instead of this English word man—is it not, I say, ridiculous to ask me, "*what is homo?*" and expect me to put you in possession of some new idea, as represented by that word *homo*, different from, and other than, the ideas which are represented by the English word man? And surely the folly and insignificance of the question are not lessened, because it

is the genius of one language to express by *one word* as many ideas as can only be expressed by *several words* in another language! Thus, if I choose to translate the two words "wise man" into the *one* Greek word *sophron*, (which signifies the same ideas) is it not ridiculous to ask me, "what is *sophron*?"—expecting me to tell you that it is the sign of some new idea, different from, and other than, those represented by the English words "*wise man*." The word *sophron* is a Greek word, which any Englishman may use, if he pleases, (for the sake of brevity, or rhyme, or metre, or what not) as the symbol of his own two words "*wise man*."

Yet, however absurd all this seems to be, it is what we are constantly doing. We translate the English words, "what sort of a thing," into the Latin word *quality*, and then ask, "what is *quality*?" And proceed, with all the equanimity in the world, to talk about *primary qualities*, and *secondary qualities*! Risum teneatis?

We translate the English word *man* into the Latin word *homo*, and then ask, "*what is homo*?" Risum teneatis?

We translate the English word *breath* into the Latin word *spirit*, and then ask, "what is *spirit*?" Risum teneatis?

We translate the English word *company* into the shorter English word *co.*, and then ask, "*what is co*?" Risum teneatis?

We translate the English words "*that which one thinketh*," or "*that which thingeth us*," or (which is the same thing in amount) "*that which exists*," into the Anglo-Saxon word *treowth*, now spelled *truth*, and then ask, "*what is truth*?" Risum teneatis?

We translate the modern English words, "*that which is remembered*," into the Anglo-Saxon word *mind*, and then ask, with all the gravity of so many owls, "*what is mind*?" and quarrel among ourselves, like so many angry monkeys, because no one can answer the question. Once more, I say, risum teneatis?

This is *one* of the tricks of language. Now let us return to the word *solidity*, and unearth *another*.

I have just shown you how frequently we are in the habit (for convenience and brevity's sake) of translating certain words in our own language, into certain equivalent words in another



—and I have also shown you the gross absurdity of those teachers of metaphysical fustian who suppose that, by virtue of this translation, we acquire any new ideas.

I will now show you that, in like manner, we are also in the habit of translating *one form of expression* in our own language into *another form of expression* in the same language. I will also show you how this *second sort of translation* has led these same manufacturers of metaphysical fustian into a similar error.

The Rev. E. Bushby, in his essay on the mind—which is, and only purports to be, a condensation of John Locke, only dismissing some of Locke's ancient nonsense, and substituting some more modern nonsense in its place—illustrates what is meant by solidity, by saying: “whether we move or rest, we feel something under us that supports us, and hinders our farther sinking downwards.” It is true that he says, a line or two farther on, that solidity “*is as essential a quality of water or air as of adamant,*” and thus turns the quality of fluidity out of house and home—for if *fluidity* (in case there be such a thing—and if there be not, it is a great mystery to me how there should be such a thing as *solidity* either)—if, I say, fluidity, be not allowed to reside in water or air, I cannot imagine where Mr. Bushby will find a habitation for it at all. Again—if solidity be an essential quality of water because, as Mr. Bushby says, it *resists* pressure, when enclosed in a gold globe, it really seems to me that fluidity must also be an essential quality of water, because it *yields* to pressure, when it is *not* confined in a gold globe. And, therefore, in a bottle of wine, before the cork is drawn, the wine is *solid*—but, as soon as you draw the cork, then it is a *fluid*. But as I have not “sworn to try your patience to the utmost,” let us go on.

If I wish to excite in you the idea of *gold*, I can do so merely by pronouncing the word *gold*—which word, being a noun, that is, a name, and a name only, will, thus standing alone, perform its office, and express my meaning, and do all I wish it to do, by exciting in you the idea of *gold*. But if I wish, not merely to excite in you the idea of *gold*, but also to let you know that I desire you to couple that idea with some other idea, then I express this additional desire by joining to the end of the word

*gold*, the word *en*—and I use the word *golden*—and if I stop there, you would directly inquire, “golden what?”—thereby proving that you understood this additional desire, and that I had added the word *en* to the word *gold*, in order to let you know that I intended to add the word *gold* to some other word, in order to excite in you the idea of gold *in conjunction* with some other idea. I then add the word *wire*—and then you have, in your mind, the idea of a wire coupled with the idea of gold—a golden wire. But you cannot fail to observe that, although I have changed the noun *gold* into the adjective *golden*, all I have done by that is to put the word *gold* into a condition to be joined with another word—given it, in fact, an adjective form—and let you know that that word is not intended by me to stand *alone*, but that I am going to add some other word to it. You will observe that the word *golden* still performs precisely the same office as the word *gold*—viz. that of exciting in you the idea of *gold*—and that the alteration in its termination by the addition of *en*, makes no alteration whatever in the meaning of the word gold—that the word gold is the sign of the same idea or ideas precisely, whether used in an adjective form, or as a noun or name. And to prove this still more surely, (if that were possible) we often use the word gold in an *adjective* manner, without giving it an adjective form—we say, for instance, a *gold watch*, meaning a *golden watch*.

Now, then, come with me into the garden. On this spot of *earth* I draw a square about the size of an ordinary flag-stone. Come, and stand within it. You observe I have used the word *earth*. But the Latins sometimes used the word *solum* to signify earth—as we sometimes use the word *soil* to denote the same thing. I choose, therefore, to use the Latin word *solum*, instead of the English word *earth*, in order to denote that portion of the earth on which you are standing—in order to denote that “something” (to use Mr. Bushby’s words by which he illustrates what is meant by solidity, and which I have quoted above) that “something under (you) that supports (you) and hinders (your) farther sinking downward.” Now the Latins wanted to serve this noun *solum* as we sometimes serve the word *gold*—that is, to put it into a condition to be joined

with some *other word*; and to intimate to the hearer that the speaker desired first to excite in the hearer's mind the idea represented by the word *solum*, and then that this idea was to be coupled with some other idea to be presently excited in his mind by that *other word*, as soon as it should be mentioned. In order to effect this object, they did not, as we do with the word *gold*, viz. postfix the word *en*; but between the first syllable *sol*, and the second syllable *um*, of the word *sol-um*, they introduced the word *id*—making it into *sol-id-um*—*solidum*. Now the word *id* is a Greek word signifying *like*—so that *solidum* signifies *solum-like*, or *like solum*. And thus the Latin phrase *aurum solidum* (solid gold) really signifies *solum-like* gold—that is, not gold which is fluid *like water*, but gold which, *like solum*, will, if you stand upon it, “prevent your farther sinking downward.” Thus, then, by changing the termination of *solum* from *um* into *idum*, the Latins made their noun *solum* into an adjective, and so put it into a condition to be coupled with any other word, and informed the hearer that the speaker intended that it should be so coupled. But you will here please to observe that this alteration in the termination makes no difference whatever in the signification of *solum*. *Solum* still signifies the earth, and nothing else, whether it stand by itself, as *solum*; or whether it stand joined to the Greek word *id*, as in *sol-id-um*. In the one, it signifies the *earth* simply—in the other, *like the earth*. Whatever the word *id* may add to the meaning of the word *solum*, it certainly can subtract nothing from it. I have told you, sometime ago, that we often convert Latin words into English words by merely dropping the final *um* of the word we wish to adopt. Thus our words *interdict*, *verdict*, *intellect*, are merely the Latin words *interdict-um*, *veredict-um*, *intellect-um*, with the *um* dropped. And we have adopted the Latin word *solid-um* by the same process, and thus acquired our word *solid*.

Thus far you will observe, that in all this madness there is a very manifest method. I mean with regard to the terminations of words. But we shall presently find that we have preserved all the madness, while all the method has been lost or overlooked.

Thus, then, the Romans, by help of the Greek word *id*, (like)



converted their noun *solum*, into the adjective *solidum*—thereby depriving it of the power of standing alone, and informing the hearer that the ideas represented by it were intended to be added to, or compared with, some other idea afterward to be excited by some other noun. *Solum* signifies *the earth*, *solidum* *like the earth*, and *solidum aurum* signifies *gold* which is *like the earth*—that is, *gold* which, if you stand upon it, will not give way under you like *molten* gold, but will support you *like the earth*.

But now, having got this new compound word *sol-id-um*, in the form of an adjective, (a form in which it cannot stand alone) they also wanted the same word in the form of a noun—that is, a form in which it *might* stand alone. This was absolutely necessary, in order to make the ideas represented by that compound word the subject of speech. For we can only talk of things, or the ideas of things, by means of the *names* of things, or of the ideas of things—that is, by means of nouns. All those ideas concerning which we desire to converse, must of necessity be represented by *nouns*, that is, *names*, before we can do so. Whatever ideas, therefore, are represented by an adjective, that adjective must be altered into a noun before we can converse concerning those ideas. For the noun is the *id de quo loquimur*. The Romans wanted to converse concerning the ideas represented by the compound word *sol-id-um*. They, therefore, in order to enable themselves to do so, changed its adjective form *solidum* into the nominal form *solidi-tas*—that is to say, they thus put the word into that condition which would enable it to *stand by itself*. If we wanted to do the same with the English adjective *earth-like*, we should effect it in a similar manner—that is, by adding to it the termination *ness*—and the adjective *earth-like* (which cannot stand alone, nor become the subject of speech) would then become *earth-like-ness*—which *can* stand alone, and can become the subject of speech. We cannot make the English adjective *solid*, the *subject* of speech. We cannot say, “I admire the solid of that structure;” nor, “such a thing has a good deal of solid in its appearance”—but we must change the adjective form into the nominal form, and say, “I admire the *solidity*, &c. ;” or, “such a thing has a deal

of *solidity*, &c. But it is manifest that whatever is meant by the one word is also equally indicated by the other—that is, whatever is meant by *solid* is also signified by *solidity*. The change in the termination does no more than fit the word for different modes of expression. The ideas represented by the word remain unchanged.

Our word *solidity* is nothing but this word *soliditas*, with its Latin termination *tas* changed into the English termination *ty*.

Now here you will observe several translations. First, the Latin noun *solum* (the earth) is translated into the Latin adjective *solidum* (like the earth)—then the adjective is re-translated into a noun, *soliditas* (earth-like-ness)—then the Latin noun *soliditas* is translated once more into the English noun *solidity*.

Thus far all is method—but now comes the madness and the folly. For surely it is both madness and folly, too, to suppose that these changes in the termination of a word, in order to suit it to the different modes of expression and exigencies of speech, can have the slightest possible effect in changing the meaning of so much of the word as remains permanent throughout all these *terminational* changes. Here, for instance, is a word I have just now coined. I mean the word *terminational*. Is the meaning of the word *termination* altered, in the slightest degree, because I wanted, at that moment, to use it in the form of an adjective, and effected my object at once by adding to the noun the adjective termination *al*? And would the adjective *terminational* be at all changed, as to its signification, by once more cutting off the final *al*, and so reducing it again to the form of a noun? Clearly not. It is the *USE* of the word which is alone changed, and not its *meaning*. It is the same with *solidum* and *soliditas*—*solid* and *solidity*. They all represent the idea of the earth, or anything else which will not, like water, yield to pressure, but which will, like the earth, resist it.

But, say the abstract philosophers, although *solid* signifies *like the earth*, yet the word *solid-ity* has no such signification—and does not signify the earth, nor anything on, nor within, nor under the earth—nor anything, indeed, in the universe—nor the likeness of anything in the universe—it is, say they, merely the name of—“think what!” as Moore says—an abstract idea!

The poet, you know, somewhere tells us of

“Anthropophagi,

Or men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders.”

*Anthropophagi* means certain man-eating men. With your mind's eye you may see them plainly enough—horrid-looking monstrous fellows, without heads on their shoulders, and with great glaring hungry eyes staring at you from beneath their arms, while their great white teeth are tearing the flesh and crunching the bones of a human limb. But now, say these philosophers, only take up your pen, and dipping it carefully into the ink, just convert the final letter *i*, of the word *anthropophagi*, into a *y*, and lo!—mirabile dictu—the monsters have all vanished with the suddenness of a flash of lightning! *Anthropos* no longer signifies a man, and *phagon* no longer signifies that motion of the jaws called eating, and *anthropophag* no longer signifies men-eating men, or man-eaters. Oh no!—it is now merely the sign of an abstract idea, and is no longer the name of any *thing*, either in heaven, or earth, or the waters under the earth.

Surely it needs no conjurer to perceive that this is sheer nonsense. *Anthropo-phag* will continue to signify a man-eater, tag it with whatever termination you will. But to proceed—when we say that *solidity* is one of the *qualities* of a brick, we merely declare *what sort of thing* a brick is. If we put the affirmation into the form of question and answer, this will become evident, and the true meaning of the words *quality* and *solidity* will become evident at the same time. What is the *quality* of a brick? Answer: *solidity*. What *sort of thing* is a brick? Answer: it is that *sort of thing*, or belongs to that class of things which, if you stand upon them, “will (like the earth) support you, and prevent your farther sinking downward.” Can anything be clearer? There needs no etymology for all this! It needs nothing more than common sense. For if the words *what-sort-of-thing-ness* do actually convey men's meaning—and if that meaning be precisely the same which is conveyed when they use the word *quality*—is not that proof positive that the word *quality*, (let its etymology be what it may) does assuredly signify all and whatever is signified by the several words *what-sort-of-thing-ness*?



The word *solidity*, therefore, is merely (in our language) a symbol which we use (for brevity's sake) instead of the words *likeness to the earth*, or *being like the earth*. It is, in fact, like all the others of this class, really and truly a *pronoun*. It is, like *I*, or *you*, or *we*, a symbol used *instead* of one or more nouns.

I will give you a few familiar instances of the manner in which these so-called abstract nouns are formed; and though some of my new creations will have an awkward sound, I will defy all the scholars in Europe to say that they are not strictly proper English words, and formed according to an equally strict analogy, and moreover perfectly intelligible, which is all that is required of any word. It is the awkwardness which you will observe in some of these words which drives us to the Latin and Greek, to seek for equivalent words in those tongues; because those tongues are so much more pliant and brief than our own.

Here is a brick. First, I affirm of this brick that *it is solid*, or that it *possesses solidity*. Are not these two phrases mutually interchangeable? and must they not therefore mean precisely the same? Whence then do I get the new abstract idea said to be represented by the word *solidity*, since the two phrases mean the same thing, and, in the former phrase, there is no noun at all either abstract or otherwise?

This brick *can be broken*—therefore it possesses (if I speak in Latin) *frangibility*; (if in English) *breakability*. It can be *reduced to powder*—therefore it possesses (if I speak Latin) *pulverizability*; (if English) *powderability*. But it can be not only powdered, but powdered either in a mill or under a boot-heel—therefore it possesses, say our philosophers, both the abstract qualities of *powder-in-a-mill-ability* and *powder-under-a-boot-heel-ability*—and these two words are the signs of the two abstract ideas of *powder-in-a-mill-ability* and *powder-under-a-boot-heel-ability*. But this brick can be *painted green*—therefore it possesses the abstract quality of *green-paint-ability*. And so you may go on creating, not only abstract nouns, but also abstract ideas, as long as you can continue to affirm anything new of these bricks.

We are told there are two sorts of qualities, primary and secondary. Secondary qualities, says professor Stewart, how-

ever, ought to be called the “*mathematical affections of matter.*” And we should “restrict the phrase *primary qualities,*” adds this philosopher, “to hardness, softness, and other properties of the same description.” “And the line which I would draw between these *primary qualities* and *secondary* is this: that the former necessarily involve the notion of extension, and consequently of *externality or outness,*” (a new abstract idea, coined for this occasion by professor Stewart) “whereas the latter are only conceived as the unknown causes of known sensations, and, when *first apprehended by the mind*” (professor Stewart seems to suppose the mind is something like a bum-bailiff, who, tapping these abstract ideas on the shoulder, takes them at once into custody) “do not imply the existence of anything locally distinct from the subjects of its own consciousness.”

Now the question is this—is *powder-under-a-boot-heel-ability* a *primary* quality or *secondary*? For I can recognise in it neither *externality or outness*, nor *internality or inness*, nor any *mathematical affections* of any kind—all I can recognise in it is *under-a-boot-heel-ness*, which does not seem to me clearly to refer it either to one or the other of the two classes of qualities—so that the learned professor must look out for a new *line of distinction*.

*Extension* is another *quality* of this brick. It is another word which tells you *what sort of a thing* a brick is. Its surface is *extended*, as you might extend threads in every direction until you produced the appearance of a spider’s web—or the surface of a piece of silk. I say this brick is not like the point of a needle, but it is stretched out in every direction. Or, if I choose to vary the form of expression, I say it possesses (if I speak in Latin) *extension*; or (if I speak English) *stretch’d-out-ness*. In both instances I mean precisely the same thing. What are the *qualities* of a brick? One of them is *extension*. *What sort of a thing* is a brick? The word *extension* answers the question, and informs you that it is an *extended* thing—that it belongs to that class of things which are *extended*; or, (if you choose to vary the form of the adjective or participle *extended* into the form of a noun) *that sort of things which possess extension*. But, vary the termination as you please, the words *extended* and *exten-*

sion will excite in your mind something or other having a flat surface, and the phrase, "it possesses extension," will merely inform you that a brick is like that thing with a flat surface, (whatever it happen to be) which the word *extension* or *extended* excited in your mind. I cannot treat this word exactly as I did the word *solidity*, because I do not know the *particular object* of which the word *extend* is the name. But whatever it was, it was certainly something which is what we call *stretched out*. Any thing, therefore, which is stretched out will do as well as the *particular* thing of which *extend* is the name—say a spider's web. Then the phrase, "this brick possesses *extension*," would be equivalent to, "this brick possesses *spider's-web-ness*"—and all it would *mean* would be that it is like a spider's web—not in all respects, (for it is also *like the earth* in one respect) but only in this—that it is stretched out in every direction.

This word then, like all other similar words, is merely a symbol used to represent all those words which would be necessary to describe an extended surface—and to ask, "what is extension? is as absurd as to ask, "what is co.?" or "what is  $x$ ?" Standing by itself it means nothing—nothing but the words of which it is the symbol, viz. *stretched out*, or *that which is stretched out*, &c. &c. according to the manner of its employment. To say that a brick possesses the quality of *extension*, is merely to say that it belongs to, or is like, or is of kin to, that sort or class of things which are extended. The two abbreviated symbols, quality and extension, save us the trouble of repeating all this long roundabout periphrasis.

It is admitted on all hands, since Horne Tooke's time, that all general terms were originally the names of *particular things*; and that they have become *general terms* by being applied to all such things as are like, or of kin to, those particular things of which they were first the particular names.

A savage, having seen a stream of water, and having agreed with his tribe to call it a *river*, whenever he saw another stream of water, would call that also by the name of river. Every stream of water, would thus become a river; and that word river, which was at first only the particular name of that particular stream of water which the savage saw *first*, would be-



come a *general term* to indicate any and every stream of water—or, in other words, to signify all those objects which bore a general resemblance, were like, or of kin to, that particular object to which the term was first applied, viz. the river which was first beheld by the savage. All general terms, therefore, involve comparison—comparison with that particular thing of which any one general term was originally the particular name.

When, therefore, I say, a thing is *extended*, I do, in fact, only say that that thing may be compared with, is like, or of kin to, that other particular thing of which the word *extend*, or rather the word *tend*, was originally the *particular* name. We do not now know what that particular thing was; but we do know that it must have been something with a flat surface; because it could not have become a *general term* for *such* things, had it not first of all been the particular name of some such thing—since general terms are but particular terms, applied to all such things as are of the same kind as that particular thing to which the term was first applied.

I say we do not now know what the particular thing was to which the term *tend* was first applied, but that it must have been something with a broad surface. I have therefore supposed, in order to illustrate what I am saying, and since it is of no consequence what the thing really was, so long as it only had a flat surface, that the word *tend* was first used as the particular name of a spider's web. Supposing this to be the case then, when I say a thing is extended, I only say, in fact, that it is like a spider's web; and when I say a thing possesses extension, I only say, in fact, that it possesses the appearance of, or likeness to, a spider's web. The difference is merely a difference in the form of expression. For it is quite clear that whether I say man is a reason-creature, or reasonable creature, or creature possessing reason or reasonableness; or that he is a rational creature, or a creature possessing rationality, or ratiocinative capabilities—I say it is quite clear, let me vary the form of expression as I may, and whether I use adjectives with the verb *is*, or nouns with the verb *possess*, that I still mean one and the same thing, and all that my words can do or are meant to do, is to cause the hearer to

couple in his mind the idea (whatever it be) represented by the word reason, with the idea represented by the word man.

The Latin participle *extens-um* we translate by the words, *that which is extend-ed*. But *extend-ed* is as much a Latin word as *extens-um*. The proper translation (supposing, as I have supposed, that the root of the word signifies a spider's web) would be, *that which is like a spider's web*.

It is the fact of our having forgotten what *that particular thing is*, of which each of our *general terms* was originally the name, which has helped to involve us in the absurd mysteries of abstraction. Thus it has been violently disputed whether the word *man* be the name of a thing, or of an *abstract idea*. The abstract philosophers asserted that it was not the name of a thing; because, said they, if it be the name of a thing, tell us of what thing it is the name. Is it the name of that thing called Mr. P, or Mr. Q, or Mr. M? Does the word man signify Mr. H, or Mr. T, or Mr. W? No. And if we could enumerate all the men in the world, or that ever were in the world, or ever will be in the world, could you tell us which of them all is indicated by the word man? No, again. Then, cried the abstract philosophers, it is manifest that the word man is not the name or sign of *anything*, but only of an abstract idea. But this is mere sophistry; for general terms necessarily include all the particulars of which the generals are made up; and since *man* is the name of *all men in general*, it is equally the name of *each man in particular*—just as the word river is as certainly the name of the Thames as it is of that one particular river to which it was at first applied. If I pronounce to you the word man, and then ask you what idea it brings to your mind, you will find that it has caused you to remember some person with whom you are acquainted; and then the word man becomes (*for the time being*) the sign of the idea or image of that person whom it has caused you to remember—just as the general symbols *x* or *y* may become, *for the time being*, the particular signs of the figure 9, or 6, or 3. And thus all *general terms* become *particular terms for the time being*. Thus, the word apple may bring to my mind a nonpareil, and to your mind a pippin. *For the time being*, therefore, the word apple means (to me) a nonpareil, and

(to you) a pippin. To the minds of other men it may bring the ideas of other apples—and even to our minds, on different occasions, it may bring the ideas of different apples. But because it does not to all men, and at all times, mean one and the same particular apple, the abstract philosophers assure us that the word apple means nothing at all, but is only the sign of an abstract idea. But I say the word apple means a pippin, as incontestably as the word pippin itself does.

But here lies the difference between general and particular terms—that, although both have a meaning—that is, have the power of exciting ideas in the mind—they have not an equal power of *communicating* ideas. If I have in my mind the idea of a pippin, and I wish to *communicate* that idea to you, and if I seek to do so by using the word *apple*, I shall be almost sure to fail in my object; since, although for the time being, the word apple means a pippin to me, it may excite in your mind the idea of a biffin; and therefore means a biffin to you, while it means a pippin to me.

These general terms, therefore, can never be used to communicate any accurate or particular knowledge. And it is on this account that they have produced so much mischief and misunderstanding in the world. The word virtue, for instance, is like the word apple—a general term. And as the word apple means a pippin to one man, and a biffin to another; so the word virtue means one thing to one man, and another to another. To the Turk it has one meaning, to the Brahmin another, to an Englishman a third. As the word apple, therefore, cannot signify any one particular apple more than another, so the word virtue cannot denote any one particular class of actions more than another. If a man, who had never seen or heard of any other apple than a biffin, were to ask another man, who had never seen or heard of any other apple than a pippin, what is the meaning of the word apple, the latter would take up a pippin, and say, “it means *this*!” But the other would then take up a biffin and exclaim, “no! it means *this*!” And thereupon those two men would go to loggerheads. So if a Turk were to ask a Brahmin, what is the meaning of the word virtue, the Brahmin would say, it means abstinence from animal food.



But the Turk would immediately reply : “no ! it means abstinence from wine !” And if they called in a Jew to decide between them, the Jew would say : “gentlemen, you are both wrong ! Virtue only means abstinence from pork !” For the very reason, therefore, that the word apple means *any kind of apple whatever*, it signifies no apple *in particular*. So the word virtue can denote no kind of conduct in particular, because it is used to mean *any kind of conduct whatever*, to which any particular people have been taught to apply the term virtue.

In ordinary conversation or reading, whenever we meet with a general term, and find that the understanding of the meaning of that general term is necessary to the understanding of the argument, that general term instantly becomes a particular term, and the sign of a particular idea. Thus, if I read that it is possible to maintain life in *an animal* without food or drink, the word *animal* is a general term, and has no meaning until I have made it a particular term. While it remains a general term, I cannot reason with myself about the truth or fallacy of this assertion. But if I wish to think and reason about it, the first thing I do is to reduce the general term *animal* to the particular name of some particular animal, say a dog. And then, having got into my mind this definite and particular idea, I can think and reason about it, and satisfy myself as to whether the assertion be true or false, by trying ideal experiments with my ideal dog. If I satisfy myself that the assertion is false, as it regards that particular animal, the dog, then the assertion is false altogether. For the term animal is a general term, and therefore includes all particular animals, and the assertion is a general assertion, and, to be true, must be true in *every particular*. But, I say, unless I made the general term animal the sign of some particular animal, as the dog, I could not reason or think upon the subject, nor arrive at any conclusion. But to return to extension.

I have already shown you that, when I say, “this brick is solid or possesses solidity,” I merely inform you that it resembles the earth. And so when I say, “it is extended or possesses extension,” I merely inform you that it is also like a spider’s web—that is, *like the earth*, inasmuch as it will support you, if

you stand upon it; and, *like a spider's web*, inasmuch as it is *stretched out*, and not attenuated like the point of a thorn.

It must be remembered that, when we wish to institute a comparison, we do not always use the word *like*, but frequently omit it. Thus we often say, "such or such a man is a perfect brute"—meaning, of course, that he perfectly *resembles* a brute.

We also say, "so-and-so has a good deal of the serpent in him." In both instances we merely mean to *compare* the man, or liken him, to a brute and to a serpent.

If, then, I wish to communicate the idea of a brick to a man who never saw one, I can only do so by calling to his mind the ideas of several things, all of which it resembles in some one particular. I call to his mind a flat thing, and tell him it is like that—a thick thing, and tell him it is like that—a heavy thing, and tell him it is like that—a thing having about the same dimensions, and tell him it is like that. And I can make this comparison either by means of the verb *is*, and the adjectives flat, thick, heavy, large; or by means of the verb *possesses*, and the nouns flatness, thickness, weight, magnitude. When I say, "it is flat," I mean it is *like* flat things; and when I say it possesses flatness, I mean it possesses the *appearance* of flat things. And I am obliged to use the word *things* in the phrase *flat things*, only because we have forgotten the *particular* thing of which *flat* was once the sign. But if the particular meaning of the word *flat* had not been forgotten, but was known as the name of what we now call a pot-lid, then when I said, "*a brick is flat*," I should *mean* a brick is like a pot-lid. And when I said, "*it possesses flatness*," or extension, I should *mean*, "it possesses the *appearance* of a pot-lid." In the one case you would know what I meant, because the word flat would bring to your mind the idea of a pot-lid and nothing else. But, as it is, you still understand me, because, although the word flat does not bring to your mind a pot-lid, yet it does bring to your mind something or other which has a broad flat surface, and which will therefore serve for the purpose of comparison, and for conveying to your mind the sort of idea I wish to convey thither, just as well as a pot-lid would do.

It is just as absurd, therefore, (in a strictly etymological point of view) to say that *extension* is not the name of a thing or things, as it would be to say that *pot-lid-ness* is not the name of things. For as the addition of *ness* to the word *pot-lid* cannot prevent the word *pot-lid* from suggesting to your mind the idea of a *pot-lid*, so neither can the addition of *ion* to the word *extens* prevent the word *extens* from suggesting to your mind some broad thing or other.

But since these words have ceased to be the names of particular things, and have become general terms, they can now be only used as the symbols of other words which it would require a longer time to write or speak. Thus, instead of saying, "this brick has a superficies like all other solid bodies," I use the *symbol*, and say, "it has extension."

He, therefore, who supposes that, when he is talking about the qualities of bodies, he is *not* talking about *things*, but only about *abstract ideas*, is very much mistaken. For he who talks about extension is, in fact, talking about pot-lids, spider's webs, and all such other things as have flat surfaces.

As extension, therefore, is not the name of any *particular thing*, or *idea*, but is merely used as a symbol standing as the representative of other words, as, for instance, the words *that which is extended*—or, *that which impresses our organs after the manner of things which are extended*—or, *that which does what those things do which are extended*, viz. *stretch themselves out*—and is a contrivance of language, whose object is to put all those words of which it is the symbol into a condition which will enable them to stand by themselves, and become the subject of speech—so the following, and whole hosts of others of the same stamp, are not the names of any *particular* things or ideas, but merely symbols of other words—signs standing for other signs, as the algebraical signs *a, b, c* stand for those other signs called figures.

*Mot-ion*—(something, anything) *doing that which those things do which move*. If you desire to know what that is which those things do which move, nothing but your senses can inform you. Look at any moving body and you will know.



*Equitat-ion*—(some one, any one) doing what those do who ride on horse-back.

*Stat-ion*—(something, anything) doing that which those things do which stand—or, the *place* where anything stands.

*Conversat-ion*—(some persons, any persons) doing what those do who turn toward each other, i. e. talk.

*Sensat-ion*—(something, anything) doing that which those things do which *feel*. This word has been made from a false analogy, there being no such past participle as *sensatum* in the Latin language. And the framers of it also supposed that the act of feeling was an operation performed *by* us, instead of *upon* us. If you desire to know what that is which those things do which feel, or rather which is done to them, your senses alone can inform you of this, as of everything else.

*Vis-ion*—(some one, any one) doing that which those things do which see. Here is the same error as in the word sensation, arising from the supposition that seeing is an act performed by us.

*Rat-io*, Lat.—*Rais-on*, Fr.—*Reas-on*, Eng.—(something, anything) doing that which *things* do—viz. affecting our bodily organs. The word is nearly equivalent to *experience*, which means to discover, or know by means of our organs of sense. To say that so and so is contrary to reason, is to say that it is contrary to the experience of our senses. To say that a thing is reasonable, is to say that it accords with the testimony of our senses. To reason signifies to be affected by things, and to have our conduct determined accordingly. When the cat dipped her paw into the egg-cup half-filled with milk, and licked it, because she could not get her muzzle far enough into the cup to lap its contents, her conduct was the result of reasoning—that is, she was moved to do what she did by the milk which she desired to get at, and the smallness of the vessel, which hindered her from doing so—in a word, she was *thinged* to do what she did,

and the *things* which *thinged* her were the milk and the cup.

But the word also signifies *to talk*. Thus we say, "I reasoned with myself upon the subject." It derives this double sense from the double sense of the noun *res*, from which the verb is derived. Like the English word *thing*, the Latin word *res* signifies, in its first sense, speech—in its secondary sense, it is merely the general name of all the objects of which our senses can take cognizance. Like *thing*, therefore, it gives origin to two verbs, viz. to speech or speak, and to be affected, that is, to have our senses impressed, by things. Brutes, therefore, can only reason in this last sense of the word, which is the cause of the inferiority of their reasoning powers. When a man says, "it rained yesterday, which is the *reason* why I did not go to church"—here the rain is the *thing* which *thinged* him, and determined his conduct. If you have understood all that I have said about the verb *to think*, you can have no difficulty in understanding the true senses of this word *reason*. In *one* of its senses, derived from *one* of the senses of its root, *res*, it means to talk—in its *other* sense, derived from the *other* sense of its root, it signifies to be affected by things, or *thinged*. And as our conduct is determined by the mode in which we are affected by things, we are therefore said to act from *reason*, or according to reason. A dog, therefore, can reason, and does reason, because he is excited to action by things, and his conduct is governed accordingly with the manner in which things affect him. But his reasoning powers are much less than man's, because, from his want of the faculty of speech, he cannot cause things to affect him at pleasure—that is, he cannot, by the utterance of words, and the force of that association with which words are associated with things, cause things which have impressed him once to impress him again, whenever he pleases, after that manner which we call *remembering*.

The following consideration will show the vast importance of words in this respect. Suppose a man to have followed out some particular chain of reasoning—not for any particular purpose, but accidentally, or for amusement. If he think no more about it for some time, he will forget it, or a part of it—some of the links in

the chain will be lost—and if he wish, after the lapse of some time, to reason the matter over again, he will probably not be able to do so with the same clearness with which he succeeded before. But if he have taken the precaution to make memoranda, although those memoranda be no more than a single word here and there, the referring to those words at almost any after time will recal, not only all the links in the chain, but also in the same order in which he had first arranged them.

A man who has composed a long speech, to be delivered at a future time, may always enable himself to remember it when he wants, by only putting down a few heads of its several divisions. Such is the power of words, and such the secret of man's superior reasoning faculty! How far could Sir Isaac Newton have proceeded in any one of his astonishing calculations, if he had not possessed the means of writing down each step of the process as he went along? Try and multiply in your mind any four figures by any other four figures, and you will find it impossible. This alone is sufficient to show you how extremely little (almost nothing) can be done without some means to aid the memory, as we say—that is, some means of causing ourselves to be *thinged* over again at pleasure. Words are, in the ordinary reasoning processes of mankind, what figures are in the more difficult, sustained, and abstruse ratiocinations. Whatever a dog sees he forgets—to whatever a man sees he gives a name, writes that name down, and whenever he sees, or hears, or pronounces that name, he causes himself to be re-impressed by that thing after that manner which we call remembering; and thus a thing, or concatenation of things, which, at the time, had no influence on his conduct, may be made, on a future occasion, and under other circumstances, a motive to action—and then that man is said to act from reason. The reasoning consists in his having caused himself to be *thinged* over again.

*Imagination*—(some one, any one) doing that which those things do which reflect, or possess, or contain the image or representation of anything else. To imagine, therefore, is to do what the looking-glass does, viz. contain an image or representation of something else.

These English words (as they are called, but Latin words as



they really are) ending in *ion*, seem to be composed of a Latin past participle and the Greek second aorist participle *ἰων* (*ion*) of the verb *εἰμι*, to go, to act, to do. For it must be remembered that the Greek *εἰμι* signifies to perform *any kind* of action, and not simply to progress from one place to another. Thus *ἰεναι τινι διαφιλίας* signifies *to act* towards any one with kindness. It is the same with our word *go*. We say the clock *goes*—it is *going* to rain—vulgar people say, “don’t *go* for to make a fool of yourself now”—and when you are reading the paper at breakfast, and your wife says, “come, drink your tea,” you say, in answer, “I am *going* to drink it directly,” although you have no intention, and no occasion, to quit your chair.

The termination *ion*, therefore, signifies *acting* or *doing*, and gives the word to which it is post-fixed the force and signification of our present participles ending in *ing*. Thus *motion* and *moving* have precisely the same sense—the one signifying (something, anything) doing that which those things do which move—and the other signifies (something, anything) moving. It is clear that *moving*, and *doing* that which those things do which move, signify the same thing. The reason why I am obliged to use this periphrasis, viz. “doing that which those things do which move,” is only because we do not know the name of that particular thing which the root of the word *move* represents. But supposing it to have been what we now call lightning—then, instead of saying that “motion signifies (something, anything) doing what those things do which move,” I should say “(something, anything,) doing what the lightning does—or lightning-acting.”

It is as absurd, therefore, to ask me what *motion* is, as it would be to ask me what *moving* is. They both signify *something, anything which moves*; and if you desire to know in what manner moving bodies affect your sight—wherein consists the difference of appearance between moving bodies and bodies at rest—it is clear that words cannot inform you—nothing can inform you but *seeing some body in motion*.

I believe the Greek *εω*, to go, which is the root of *εἰμι*; and the Latin *eo*, to go, as well as our own words *go*, *to*, and *do*, are all one word—that they are all only so many different ways of

spelling the same word, which word was originally the name of some object in nature which, being generally or always recognised under that condition which we call action, was always associated in the mind with that appearance which moving bodies present, and thus became at last used to designate anything and everything which presents that appearance—that is to say, ceasing to signify any *one particular* moving thing, it was used to designate any and every thing which presented the same *appearance* as that particular thing did of which it was originally the exclusive name—just as the word river, at first the name of some particular stream of water, came at last to be the name of every body of water which presented the general appearance of that body of water to which it was first applied. The word having thus come to signify *no one thing in particular*, but any moving body in general, philosophers supposed the word to signify no body at all, but the *appearance* of moving bodies *alone, without the bodies themselves*—and therefore fancied that the word *motion* was the name of an idea without any reference to, or connexion with, bodies themselves—in a word, an abstract idea. But it is quite clear that although we can have a very clear idea of *things in motion*, or moving things, we can have no idea whatever of motion *without* something moving, and that we never could acquire any such idea. Endeavour to conjure up to your mind's eye an idea of motion, and all you will get will be an idea of some body or other *moving*. You might just as well hope to obtain an idea of *river* without water, as of *motion* without some *body* moving. To move, therefore, signifies to do what the *mo* does, or *mo-acting* (supposing *mo* to be the root of the word). But since we do not know what particular thing that is which was called *mo*, any other thing will do as well, so long as (like the *mo*, whatever it was) it be inseparably connected in the mind with that appearance which is presented by bodies which move—a bird, a stream of water, the leaf of the aspen tree—and then motion would signify bird-acting, or doing what the bird does—stream of water-acting, or doing what a stream of water does—aspens-leaf-acting, or doing what the aspen-leaf does—that is, presenting that appearance which bodies exhibit when *not at rest*.

All infinitive moods of verbs, and present participles, are made up of a noun which is the name of a thing, and another noun which has come to be the general name for all bodies in action, and thus suggests to the mind what is now suggested by our general term *action*; just as our word *like*, which signifies the skin, has come, at last, to signify the external covering of anything whatever—or, as we say, the *appearance* of a thing. Thus, to say that one thing is like another, is to say that one thing has the *skin* of another. The use of this word was easily extended (figuratively) from objects of sight to objects of the other senses.

In English, the word denoting action is *to*—in Anglo-Saxon it is *an*, *ian*, *gan*, *agan*, *gean*, and sometimes *on*. I do not agree with Sharon Turner that *an*, *ian*, and *gan* or *agan* are three different words signifying to give, to possess, and to go. They are but fragments and different modes of writing the one word *gan* or *agan*, which signifies to act, to do.

It is not impossible that the old word *ga*, now written *go*, may be identical with the old Anglo-Saxon word *ga*, a goad—and then to go, would signify to do what the cattle do when goaded—that is, put themselves in motion, or become moving bodies, instead of bodies at rest. Surely it is not more difficult to conceive that we got our word signifying action in general from a word signifying a goad, than that we have obtained our word signifying similitude in general from a word signifying the skin. Our word *ing*, too, which is identical with the German *ung*, and with which we terminate our present participle, and express action, may possibly be the Anglo-Saxon *ong-a*, which also signified a goad. The *ancient* termination of our present participles, which was in *ende* or *gende*, I also believe to belong to the same word *gan*, to go, in the general sense of to do, to act. And the Latin *ag-ere*, to drive, I believe to be only this same word *ga*, a goad, with a very common metathesis of letters, *a g* for *g a*; and with the Latin termination *ere* significative of action. Thus *ag-ere* would signify to act with a goad, which is exactly equivalent with the meaning given in the dictionaries as its primitive signification, viz. to drive, as they drive cattle. All language is merely suggestive; and par-



ticular words, which are associated in the mind with particular circumstances, are often used in order *to suggest* those circumstances (whether of action or otherwise) which are so associated, *in conjunction with other things* which are not associated in the mind with those particular circumstances. Thus the word bishop, being associated in the mind with certain actions performed only by bishops, has the power of causing those actions to be associated, for the time, with any other thing, the name of which is pronounced in conjunction with that word bishop—say, for instance, *children*. “To lange *an-biscop-od ne wurthe*”—(children) “should not be too long *unconfirmed*,” that is, *unbishoped*. Here the word bishop not only suggests the two ideas of *children and a bishop*, but of *children submitting to*, and a bishop *performing, those actions* which (altogether) are called confirmation.

*Causat-ion*—(something, anything) which does what *causes* do, viz. produce effects.

*Not-ion*—(something, anything) doing (to us) what those things do which make themselves known to us—that is, producing their natural effects upon our senses.

You will perceive, therefore, that these words are not the signs of ideas, but the signs of whole sentences of words. There can, therefore, be no such thing as an idea of motion, nor any such thing as motion. There are bodies which move, and we may have an idea of *something moving*, but the word motion is merely a symbol standing for other words—such as, *bodies which move*; or, *moving bodies*; or, in the strict etymological sense, *doing what moving bodies do*; with the words *something, anything*, understood.

Of a similar nature are our participles ending in *ing*. Thus *Hearing*—signifies *ear-acting*—(some one, any one) using their ears.

*Feeling*, or *Felling*—that is, *skin-acting*—(some one, any one) doing something with the skin; or rather having something done to the skin.

*Smelling*—something *doing* something to the nose.

*Tasting*—something *doing* something to the tongue.

*Seeing*—something *doing* something to the eyes—that is, pro-

ducing the ordinary effects which certain things are calculated to produce upon all these several organs of sense.

Instead of using these English words ending in *ing*, I can express precisely the same things by the Anglo-Latin words ending in *ion*: as, vision, sensation, audition, olfaction, and gustation. There is no more mystery, therefore, about *seeing*, *feeling*, &c., than there is about *falling*, *sinking*, *swimming*—nor any more difficulty in answering the question, “what is feeling or sensation?” than there is in answering the question, “what is falling?” “what is sinking?” *Sinking* is something *doing* something in water; and *feeling* is something *doing* something to the skin. These are the *verbal* meanings of the words in question—these are the *several* words which the *single* words stand for. If you would know the meaning in nature which these *several* words stand for, I send you to your senses to inquire. It is of *them only* you can learn. Your eyes alone can *inform* you—that is, put into you the *form* or *appearance* which a thing has when sinking through water. And, *not* your eyes, but your *skin only* can teach you what things do when they impress or strike against your skin. As to the *cause* of sensation or feeling, there is no more mystery about this than there is about the *cause* of a stone falling, or a cork swimming or floating. It is true that I cannot tell you the *cause* (as it is called) of sensation, but so neither can you, nor any man, tell me the cause why stones fall and corks float—why things which are specifically lighter than water float on its surface, while things which are specifically heavier sink through it. The cause of seeing, we are told by modern optical philosophers, is the “vibration of ether”—which strikes against our eyes, and cause them in their turn to vibrate—viz., four hundred and eighty-two millions of millions of times in a second, in order to make us see an object red—that is, to make an object look red—and seven hundred and seven millions of millions of times in a second, in order to make an object appear violet-coloured. That these regular and measured vibrations do actually occur, and with this precise degree of velocity, is, I believe, beyond doubt. But what then? We are still no nearer the cause of seeing than we were

before. These philosophers have only furnished us with a new name for seeing. Formerly we said, "I see a violet—what is the cause of seeing?" Now we may say: "my eyes are vibrating seven hundred and seven millions of millions of times in a second—what is the cause of these vibrations?"

Matter is the general name for whatever can be recognised by our senses. But the same portions of matter do not always affect our senses after the same manner. Thus, a stone *at rest* produces one effect, while a stone *moving* produces another. Nothing but our eyes or our skin can put into us the idea of a stone at rest; and nothing but our eyes, also, can put into us the idea of a stone in motion. But when we have seen both a stone at rest and a stone in motion, we have still seen nothing but a stone; and, therefore, have acquired no idea but the idea of a stone—a stone, seen under different circumstances of relation to other objects, and therefore impressing our eyes in a different manner. The cause why a stone falls consists in the mutual relation which exists between it and the earth, and the medium through which it falls; and the cause of sensation consists in the mutual relation which exists between ourselves and the things which surround us. The cause of internal sensations, hunger, love, &c. consists in the nature and constitution of living organized, animal matter. We know nothing of these things, (any of them), excepting only that our senses inform us that they are so, and not otherwise. All that can be said of living animal matter is, that it is *in its nature to feel* or to have *sensations*, or that it *possesses feelings*. As much, but *no more* can be said of a falling stone, viz., that it is in its nature to fall, or that it possesses weight or gravitation—gravitation signifying (something, anything) which does what those things do which fall.

If you ask an unlearned man (who is often wiser than the learned) he will answer your question in a moment. He will pinch your ear, and say, "*that* is sensation!" If you ask a philosopher, all the answer you will get will be a bushel of other words, which the one word sensation stands for. The clown gives you its *meaning*—the other merely gives you a definition of the *word*. The philosopher is struggling to make words stand us instead of our senses. He labours to make words put



into us that information which nothing but our senses can put into us. Words can make us know nothing but words—nothing can make us acquainted with the *realities of nature* but our senses. The *word stone* can make us know nothing but the word stone—nothing can make us know a stone, or give us the idea of a stone, but our eye-sight—that is, *a stone acting on the eye*. If words cannot inform us of the meaning of so simple a word as stone, how can they be expected to inform us of the meaning of such words as sensation, feeling, hearing, gravitation, &c., which are all compound words? If you have seen things which *resemble* a stone, then by calling to your mind these things I can put into you ideas which *resemble* the idea of a stone—but not the true and perfect idea of a stone itself. However near the resemblance may be, there will still be differences, and those considerable. But if the resemblance were complete, still it would not be the idea of a stone, but only a *fac-simile* of that idea.

*Cohesion*—(something, anything) doing that which things do which *cohere*. If you want to know what appearance is presented to the eye by things which cohere, you must seek the information from your eyes. Your eyes, and nothing but your eyes, can answer the inquiry, and make you *know* that which you desire to know. Words cannot do it. Words can only define words—nothing but the sense can *define things*. From words we can derive no knowledge but the knowledge of words. Things alone (through our senses) can give us the knowledge of things. But philosophers are constantly mistaking words for things—and fancy they are discussing the nature of things, when they are only discussing definitions of words.

“Newton defined all material bodies to be a congeries of corpuscles uniform, and alike; and hence inferred that the difference which bodies exhibit in colour, hardness, taste, &c., results from the different arrangement only of the corpuscles of which the bodies are composed. You perceive that the conclusion proceeds from the definition as irresistibly, as that a moon multiplied by twenty becomes twenty moons; but whether

nature conforms either to the multiplication or the deduction, depends on nature, and not on the process of multiplication and logic. But after material bodies are all resolved thus into little *verbal* corpuscles of a uniform size and shape, how came they to arrange themselves together so as to form gross, sensible bodies, of different shapes and sizes? And even how do they adhere together at all? Locke deemed this a great and even undiscoverable mystery; and nothing is more evident from his remarks, than that he expected no other answer than a quantity of words. How curious a delusion! The object sought is the sensible cohesion of matter into various shapes, sizes, &c.; and the answer is *not* any revelation of the senses, but some sentences of words. What a curious mistake of words for things!"—

A. B. JOHNSON.

*Being*—(something, anything) doing what those things do which have houses—that is, performing those actions which are proper to animals—in a word, living.

*Understanding*—to under-stand signifies to stand at the bottom of anything, as, for instance, a well. To understand an argument is to do what he does who stands at the bottom of a well—that is, to see everything which it contains—to stand in such a condition as enables his senses to take cognizance of everything contained in *that*, at the *bottom of which*, he stands. Understanding, therefore, means, (some one, any one) doing that which he does who stands at the bottom of a thing—whether it be a well, which enables him to see all that the well contains—or whether it be at the root, or bottom of, or *under*, a tree, which enables him, by looking up, to see whatever is contained among its branches. We still preserve this metaphorical manner of speaking clothed in other words: thus we say, “I will sift the whole matter to the bottom.”

Various similar examples will immediately occur to you. We usually, when we employ the two words *under* and *standing* separately, put the word standing *before* the word under, as *standing under a tree*. When we join the two words into one word we transpose them, and write and say *under-standing*

instead of *standing-under*. This is our constant practice. Thus we say, match-making, clock-making, watch-making, *not* making-match, making-clock, making-watch. Nor do we say, goings-out, nor come-in, nor lay-out—but out-goings, in-come, and out-lay. If we transpose the phrase *sifting to the bottom* in the same manner, and so make it into one word, it will be *to-the-bottom-sifting*. Now I ask you—is it not, (without reservation or qualification) just as absurd to contend that a man contains within him some extraordinary, separately-existing, active being, whose name is understanding, merely because, by a trick of language, we have transposed the two words *standing-under* into the one word *under-standing*—is not this, I say, to the full and every tittle as absurd as it would be to say that there must exist in man some separate and active being, whose name is *to-the-bottom-sifting*, merely because these separate words can be transposed, if we so please, and united into one word? It was *accident* alone which caused the framers of this word *under-standing* to draw their metaphor from a man standing under a tree, and looking up into its branches for game. The same accident might have led them to draw their metaphor (as we do, when we speak of *sifting any circumstances to the bottom*) from the actions of a man *sifting corn*. In that case the word would have been *to-the-bottom-sifting*—or, as that would have been a long word, they (if learned) would have gone to the Greek or Latin, and there found a *shorter* mode of expressing the same things, as they have done in numberless other instances. Then we should have had all those multiplied, and sometimes angry discussions, and absurd metaphysical farces, about the “*human to-the-bottom-sifting*” which have been dealt out to the world about the “*human under-standing*.”

*Substance*—(something, anything) which does what the rock does, i. e. stands. It is merely the English word *standing* translated into the Latin language. The only difference between the meaning of him who uses the word *substance*, and of him who uses the word *standing*, is, that the one speaks in Latin, and the other in English. Locke declares that we can form as good an idea of the substance of spirits as we can of the substance of matter.



And this is true—for we can form no idea of either. We can form an idea of any portion of matter *standing*, or standing matter, but none whatever of *substance* apart from matter. Locke has written thirty closely printed pages about our several ideas of substance apart from matter. But Locke had not in his mind any definite meaning when he used the word *idea*. The truth is, there is no such thing in nature as an idea, any more than there is such a thing as substance—that is, apart from matter. As *substance* is a Latin word which signifies (something, anything,) *standing*, so

*Idea*—is a Greek word signifying or standing for the English words (anything, something) which has been *seen*; and to say, “I have an idea of a horse” is merely to say, (by means of a different phraseology) “I have seen a horse.” If the word *idea* be the name of any separate existence in the universe, then we could form an idea of that existence. But this would be to have an idea of an idea!—from which common sense recoils.

B.

No such things as ideas!

A.

None—nor any such things as memory, sensation—

B.

Nor memory! Nor sensation either! Why, then, what in the world were you talking of, when you spoke of the “world without” and the “world of our own sensations?”—When you referred all the so-called operations of the mind solely to the memory?—when you asserted that ideas were nothing else but remembered sensations?

A.

Take breath a little, and I will satisfy you.

You will please to remember that my quarrel is not with language. I can conceive no contrivance more beautiful than that of language—nor anything better adapted to fulfil the office which it is intended to perform. I require no alteration in the language, either as to its natural structure or grammatical arrangement. I only require men to understand it. A child

may read the books of Euclid all through without understanding a syllable of mathematics. Is it because the language of Euclid requires altering? No. The language is well enough. The fault lies with the child who does not understand it. And besides, he who speaks at all must use words; and he must use such words as the language in which he speaks affords. But though I am compelled thus to use words, and can only direct your attention to things through the medium of words, yet I desire you to know, let me use what words I will, that I always MEAN things.

So long as it is always borne in mind that our words always refer to the realities of nature, it matters not what words, or what phraseology, we use. Thus we say, that "the sun rises." But everybody knows well enough that what is called the *sun's rising* depends, not on any motion of the sun, but on the motion of the earth. But it is not necessary to alter this form of speech, because the reality to which the phrase refers is known. We *say* one thing, but it is well known that we *mean* another. And since our meaning is known, that is sufficient. We say the sun moves from east to west. But everybody knows that what we mean is, that the earth, and not the sun, moves from west to east. In teaching children the first lessons of astronomy, the language used throughout implies, or rather directly asserts, that the sun moves round the earth. But care is taken to make the child understand, once for all, that although he uses this language, yet that he really means that it is the earth, and not the sun, which performs all the motions in question. And the child, having been thus warned as to the real *meaning* of the teacher's language, and as to the reality of nature, is in no danger of being deceived.

My object is to warn you, with regard to language in general, of the same thing of which the teacher thus warns his pupil. To warn you that in other matters, as well as in matters of astronomy, our language constantly asserts *one thing*, while we really mean *quite another*—and that, in order to avoid self-deception and misunderstanding, we must, not only in matters of astronomical language, but on ALL OCCASIONS, constantly INTERPRET LANGUAGE according to the REALITIES OF NATURE. Thus, when I

say, I possess the *idea* of a horse *in my mind*, I do not mean by the word "possess" that an idea is a something or other that can be possessed after the manner of goods and chattels—that is, locked up in a box, or kept in a cupboard, or carried about either in my pocket, or stowed away in any part of my body. Let not this word "*possess*" deceive you into the error of supposing that it can only be used with reference to things—that we cannot use it, excepting when there is *something* to be possessed—for we constantly use it when it is impossible that there should be anything to be possessed. Do we not constantly say, he "possesses nothing?" Nor do I mean, by the phrase "*in my mind*," that my mind is a something or other resembling a box, or a cupboard, or any other hollow thing in which the idea is contained. No—it is a mere *form of speech*. It is merely another way of saying that I have *seen a horse*, and have not forgotten it. The *idea* of a horse is simply an *ideal* horse—that is, a *seen* horse. *My* idea of a horse is *my* ideal horse, or a horse which *I* have seen. *Your* idea of a horse is *your* ideal horse, or a horse which *you* have seen. But I am not one thing, and the horse a second thing, and the *idea* of the horse a *third* thing! No, there are but two things spoken of, viz. I and the horse. The word *idea*, applied to the horse, merely imports that the horse spoken of is a horse which I have *seen*.

There is no such thing, therefore, as the idea of a horse, or of anything else. The idea of a horse is merely an ideal horse, or a horse which has been seen. And when I say, "I have an *idea* of a horse"—and when I say, "I have *seen* a horse"—I do but express the *same thing* in two different languages—the word *idea* being the Greek for "*seen*." In the second phrase, there is no excuse for supposing the existence of a third thing called an idea, for there is no word in the phrase to denote it. The letter *I* is a symbol which stands for my name, the word *horse* is clearly the name of a sensible object called by that name, and the verb "*have seen*" is used to denote that that *thing* called horse has produced upon that other thing, (myself) represented by the letter *I*, that effect called seeing, seeming, or appearing. But the word seeing or appearing is not the name of anything apart from the horse. It is another name given to the horse



itself (for the time being) in order to inform you that the horse spoken of is not any horse whatever, but only one of those particular horses which have been so placed as to reflect the rays of light upon the retina of my eye. And so when I say, I *possess* a mind, I merely mean that things which have been revealed to my senses have not been forgotten—but are still myneds things—that is, remembered things. So when I speak of remembered sensations, I still desire you to know that my words are to be interpreted, not according to their direct apparent import, but accordingly with the *realities of nature*. By *remembered sensations* I mean those THINGS which have impressed my senses, and which are still unforgotten. I have shown you that the act of seeing is not an act performed *by* us, but by things *upon* us. When, therefore, I say, “I can see,” I desire you to interpret my words according to the realities of nature, and to understand that, although I say, “I perform the act of seeing,” I really mean, not that I am performing any operation, but that something else is performing an operation, that is, producing an effect, upon my eyes—just as, when I say, “the sun moves from east to west,” you always understand me to mean that the earth moves from west to east. So again, when I say, I possess a memory, I do not mean that there is any such thing in existence as memory—I merely mean that the *things* which have revealed themselves to my eyes, ears, skin, tongue, nose, have not been forgotten. By the word memory, I merely mean remembered *things*. I do not mean that any particular object is *one thing*, and the memory of that object *another thing*, and myself a *third thing*! No—I merely mean that that particular object has been placed in such a relation with regard to my organs, that it has produced that effect upon them (my organs) which the nature of that object and the nature of those organs are calculated to produce and receive. An idea, therefore, is a *seen thing*—something, anything, *seen*. It is the name of a real thing—some sensible object—and not of an incomprehensible no-body-knows-what.

Although, therefore, there are no such things as memory, mind, intellect, ideas, sensations, motion, action, &c. &c.—and although there are no such operations *performed by us* as seeing,

feeling, tasting, smelling, hearing—and although, (since there are no such things as memory, mind, ideas, &c.) there can be, of course, no operations performed by them—yet I shall still continue to speak of all these things as though they were real existences—and of these operations, as though they were actually performed by us, and by our minds, memories, &c. &c. And I do this for the same reason that we still continue to talk of the “sun’s track”—the “sun’s declination”—the “sun’s path”—the “course of the sun”—the “motion of the sun from east to west,” &c. &c., and a thousand other familiar modes of speech which deceive no one, because all are familiar with the *natural realities* which they are meant to indicate.

I desire you, therefore, on all occasions to interpret my language by the *realities of nature*—or, in other words, *by the evidence of your senses*. For it is by the senses alone that the realities of nature can be discovered. Remember, once for all, that words can do NO MORE than direct our attention to the evidence of our senses. In the words of A. B. Johnson, they can do NO MORE than REFER US TO OUR SENSES. No words can discourse into a blind man the idea of colour—no written words can discourse the sound of a trumpet into a deaf man—no words can discourse the fragrance of the rose into a man destitute of smell—and so on with the other senses.

Things, therefore, and things only, can put ideas into us; and ideas themselves are nothing more than things *seen*. But, for convenience sake, and in order to avoid a multiplicity of words, the term *idea*, although etymologically only applicable to things *seen*, has been extended in its signification, and used to denote, not only things *seen*, but also things *heard, felt, tasted, and smelled*.

I shall continue, therefore, in spite of its strict etymological sense, to use the word *idea* in order to indicate, not only things which have manifested themselves to the sense of sight, but also things which have manifested themselves to any of the other senses. I shall also use the phrase “*forms of things*” in the same extended sense—and I beg of you to bear this particularly in mind. Or, if you will only bear in mind that my language is always to be interpreted by the realities of nature, that of itself will be sufficient to enable you clearly to understand me.

I must once more repeat that words can do no more than refer us to our senses. They cannot put into us the idea of the very commonest and simplest object. They cannot put the idea even of a poker into a man who has never seen a poker. They may recal to his mind certain other things which *resemble* a poker, and thus give him an idea *resembling* the idea of a poker—but no words can convey to a man the idea of a poker who has never seen one—for the idea of a poker is a *seen* poker. But even these ideas which *resemble* a poker are not put into him by words. They are all previously put into him by things, and all that words can do is to cause him to remember them. Thus if I tell a native of Hindostan that a poker is a bar of iron three feet long, and an inch in circumference, I give him an idea resembling the idea of a poker; but you must never forget that this idea of a bar of iron, which I thus recal to his mind, he could never have possessed had he never *seen* a bar of iron.

I have in my possession a pair of Asselini's forceps for the purpose of taking up arteries. If you have never seen a pair of Asselini's forceps, nothing but seeing them can give you an idea of them. I may call to your mind other forceps, and explain wherein these differ from Asselini's—and thus I may manage to give you what we call a "tolerably correct" idea of Asselini's—that is, an idea somewhat RESEMBLING the correct idea—but it is perfectly manifest that a *thing*, and a thing somewhat *resembling* that thing, are still perfectly distinct things. Nothing can give you an idea of Asselini's forceps, but *seeing* Asselini's forceps.

I have probably a "tolerably correct idea" of the countenance of Napoleon. But will anybody pretend to tell me that if I could see Napoleon's actual living countenance, I should not instantly discover that my idea was inaccurate? All men will readily admit, that although I may have in my mind an idea somewhat *resembling* the true idea of Napoleon's countenance, nothing can put into me the true and bonâ fide idea of that countenance, but that countenance itself. And it is quite clear that I could not have an idea even *resembling* that countenance if I had never *seen* a human countenance of any kind.

There is a part of the brain called pons varolii, which probably you have never seen. In order to give you some tolerable idea



*resembling* the pons varolii I may describe it. I may tell you that it somewhat resembles a bridge. But the idea you will thus get will be the idea of a bridge, and not of any part of the brain. Nothing can put into you the true idea of the pons verolii but your own eyes. There is another part called the torcular herophili. I may describe this by telling you that it is something like a wine-press. But the idea you will thus get will be the idea of a wine-press, and not of any part of the human brain. There are many other parts of the body which I might use to illustrate the fact, that we can get no ideas but such as those which come in at the senses. Such are the stapes, the malleus, the incus—that is, the stirrup, the hammer, the anvil. All the ideas you can gather from these words are the ideas of a stirrup, a hammer, and an anvil. But neither these words, nor any other, can put into you the ideas of those bones which are called by these names. Nothing can do this but your senses, and the bones themselves. I might draw these bones on paper. This would give you ideas still more resembling the true ideas. But still they would not be the true ideas, but only ideas *resembling* the true ideas. And whenever you met with these words they would recal to your mind, not the ideas of the bones, but only of those pictures of the bones which I had drawn. But even the ideas of these pictures—it is not through *words* that you get even these, but through your eye-sight.

The ideas which each individual man possesses are extremely few. Their number is exactly equal to the number of things which he has seen, felt, heard, tasted, or smelled—and has not forgotten. And that is sufficient. For although the individual things whereof creation is composed are numberless, yet they may all be distributed into a few classes, so that all the individuals of each class shall bear more or less resemblance to all the others of that class. A man, therefore, whose senses have made him acquainted with *one individual* of each class, is said to have a general idea of the whole. But this is not true. The only idea he really has is of the individual which he has seen, felt, &c. Thus I am said to have an idea of the human countenance in general—that is, of all human countenances. But this is manifestly not so. The only ideas of the human countenance I

have are those of the human countenances which I have *seen*. I am said to have a general idea of Napoleon's countenance. But, in truth, the idea I have is only an idea *resembling* it—which I have acquired through my sense of sight, by looking at his portraits—no two of which are probably exactly alike—and therefore certainly not exactly like the countenance itself. When a man, who has never seen an antelope, is told that it is an animal very like a small deer, he is said to have acquired a new idea—the idea of an antelope. But in truth he has acquired no new idea at all. He has only acquired a new name for an old idea. The only idea he has is still that of a deer only—and whenever he hears the word antelope, he will, in his mind, translate the word antelope into the words *small deer*; and if the word bring into his mind any idea at all, it will be, and can only be, the idea of a small deer.

Our knowledge, therefore, consists not of a multitude of ideas of a multitude of things, but of a few ideas *resembling a multitude* of things. Our ideas are few—but each idea bears a greater or less *resemblance* to a whole class, and serves us instead of the actual ideas of all the individuals composing a whole class. But whenever we converse about any of those individuals of a class which we have not seen, we are, in fact, only conversing about those individuals of the same class which we have seen. I can converse about horses in general, and men in general, and trees in general. But, in fact, I am all the time only conversing about those particular horses, and men, and trees which I have seen—only taking care to deprive them (mentally) of those unimportant individual differences, as for instance of color, size, &c., which distinguish one individual from another, and viewing them only with regard to those great general characteristics which are common to the whole class.

All ideas, therefore, are *particular*—and there is no such thing as a general idea, any more than an abstract idea. This is not a new doctrine, but a very old one—as old as the eleventh century—and the nominalists, who propagated it, took for their motto, “*Nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu*”—that is, “there can be nothing in the intellect which was not admitted by the senses.” How came a doctrine so simple, so manifestly

true, so perfectly conformable to nature, to be ever laid aside? The answer is plain enough. They were asked, what is intellect? What is mind? What are ideas? &c. &c. Do these come in by the senses? and they could not answer these questions satisfactorily, for want of understanding the nature and purpose of language, and for want of knowing that those operations called the operations of mind, are merely so many operations performed by things upon us, and not by us upon things. They could not account for the presence in all languages of such words as intellect and mind—they did not know what they mean, nor what purpose they serve. In order to reconcile this discrepancy, Leibnitz extended their motto, making it, "*Nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu, nisi ipse intellectus*"—that is, "there is nothing in the intellect which was not admitted by the senses, *except the intellect itself*. Had Leibnitz known that both the words intellect and mind are merely past participles, signifying the THINGS which have impressed their effects upon our nerves, he would have spared himself the egregious absurdity of talking about the intellect being "in itself." "There is," says Leibnitz, "nothing *in* the intellect, except the intellect itself!" How can a thing be contained within itself?

Very much, therefore, of our knowledge consists, not of ideas of things, but of ideas *resembling* the ideas of things. And it is this fact which fills all languages with such multitudes of metaphors. We can scarcely utter a sentence which does not contain a metaphor. Nay, there are whole hosts of words, each individual word of which contains a metaphor in itself—that is, which implies a comparison—a similitude—a *resemblance*. Such are the words we are now discussing. The word *motion*, for instance, signifies (something, anything) doing that which those things do which move—that is, affecting our sense of sight after a *like* or *similar* manner—affecting our senses in a manner which *resembles* the manner in which moving objects affect them.

We can acquire, then, no idea whatever through any other means than the senses. No human effort, no human contrivance, can put one single idea into me. Every idea, of whatever kind, must come in at the senses.

But Locke says there are ideas which we acquire by reflection.



What does he mean by reflection? He tells you himself. He says the mind *bends back* upon itself, and *takes a view* of its own operations. Locke here endeavours to make himself understood by comparing the mind to an elastic body—as, for instance, an osier twig. But in order that a comparison may assist our understanding, there must clearly be some point of resemblance between the things compared. If in conversing with you I make use of the term *scalpel*, and if you do not know the meaning of the word, having never seen a scalpel, nor heard the word used before, then I make my words intelligible to you by telling you that a scalpel is a kind of knife—that is, of kin to, or something like, a knife. This comparison of a scalpel with a knife makes me intelligible, because the two things are, in all essentials, actually similar to each other. They are both cutting instruments, made of steel; and this general resemblance is sufficient to enable you to understand what I mean by a scalpel. But when Locke compared the mind to an osier twig, or any other elastic body, did Locke really mean that the mind is an elastic material body? No—he would, had he been asked, have declared the mind to be immaterial. In what particular then does the mind resemble an elastic body? In no one single particular of any kind whatever! And this Locke himself would have confessed! What then are we the wiser for the comparison? Not one iota. If the mind did really resemble elastic bodies—had, like elastic bodies, the property of *bending*—then the illustration would have enlightened us, and exemplified Locke's meaning. But no two things can possibly be more diametrically unlike than material and immaterial things. They stand in the same relation to each other as something does to nothing—as darkness does to light—as poverty does to riches. How then can the one illustrate the other? If the mind can bend back upon itself, and recover its former position, then the mind is an elastic body. But the mind is not an elastic body—therefore the mind cannot bend back upon itself.

Here, then, Locke compares two things, between which there is no one single point of resemblance. He seeks to explain the nature of one thing by telling us that it is like another thing, which other thing it is not like in any one particular. When he

says, "the mind takes a view of its own operations," he is comparing the mind to some animal having eyes. But did he really mean that the mind has eyes? No—he merely speaks *comparatively*. But unless the mind be supposed to be some material being having eyes, he is again comparing two things which are NOT ALIKE. All that his comparison amounts to, is this—that if the mind were an animal, having the eyes of an animal, then, when the mind takes a view of its own operations, it does that which an animal would do which should look at itself while performing any action. But the mind is not an animal, nor does it possess eyes, nor any bodily organ doing duty for an eye, nor has it any one point of resemblance to an animal, or to an eye.

Locke's metaphor, therefore, is utterly insignificant. His illustration is an illustration which throws no light—his explanation an explanation which explains nothing. I might as well attempt to explain to you what I mean by the word scalpel, by comparing it with the Peak of Teneriffe, or with the great Nassau balloon. It is utterly and unconditionally absurd to the very lowest degree, to talk of the mind's bending back, or taking a view of its own operations. Nothing can bend back but flexible bodies—and nothing can "*take a view*" but things which have eyes; and to suppose that the mind can bend back is to suppose that it possesses the properties of flexible bodies—and to suppose that it can see, or take a view, is to suppose that it possesses *seeing* organs—a supposition which nobody (not Locke himself) can, for a moment, suppose. When Locke talks of the mind bending back upon itself, he is, in fact, not talking of the mind at all, but of elastic bodies which he has seen bend back upon themselves. And when he talks of the mind "taking a view," he is, in fact, talking of those things (animals) which he has seen using their eyes. In the one instance he has converted the mind (for the time being) into an elastic body, and talks about it accordingly. In the other instance he converts it (for the time being) into an animal with eyes, and talks about it as though it were actually a being possessing seeing organs. But had any one asked him whether he really supposed the mind to be either of these things, or to resemble either of these things in any one particular, he would

instantly have answered, no—the mind is immaterial—and therefore can possess nothing in common with things which are material. What then does he mean by the mind bending back? He means nothing at all. Or if he do mean anything, it can by possibility be only this—that if the mind were an elastic body, it could bend back—and if the mind were an animal with eyes, it could “take a view” by means of those eyes. But the mind is neither one nor the other, and therefore all that he has said about it amounts to nothing.

Since the mind, therefore, (having no one point of resemblance to elastic bodies) cannot bend back—and since the mind (having no one point of resemblance to things which have eyes) cannot “take a view”—what becomes of all those ideas which Locke supposed to be derived from the mind “bending back on itself, and taking a view of its own operations?” I mean his so-called ideas of reflection. There are no such ideas. There are no ideas of any kind excepting those which come to us directly through our senses; and those words which Locke supposed to be the signs of “ideas of reflection,” are not the signs of any ideas at all. They are merely the signs of other words. “The idea of perception,” says Locke, “we have from reflection.” Ridiculous! The word perception is merely a Latin word, signifying (something, anything) doing that which those things do which “take through”—i. e. through the senses. The Latin word to perceive, is exactly equivalent to the English words *to take through*. And when I say, “I perceive,” and when I say, “I take through,” I do but express one and the same thing in two different languages. When I say, I possess perception, I do but say that I possess “something which I have taken in through” my senses. The perception of a tree, is a tree taken in through my senses—that is, a tree which has impressed my senses—just as an *idea* of a tree is a tree which I have seen, that is, which has impressed my organs of sight. The English words, “*a taking-in*,” answer exactly to the Latin expression, “*a perception*.” And who ever heard or dreamed of such an idea as the idea of “*a taking-in*”? But you know we are to interpret language according to the realities of nature. And you also know that, according to the realities of



nature, it is not we who perform the act of perceiving, but it is things which produce certain effects upon us. Although, therefore, according to etymology, the word perception signifies (something, anything) doing that which those things do which perceive, yet what we must really mean by the word is this—(something, anything) producing an effect upon our organs—just as, though seeing means according to the direct interpretation of the word, (some one, any one) doing that which those things do which have eyes, yet what we really mean by the word is, (something, anything) affecting our eyes—or making an impression upon our eyes. The word perception, therefore, is merely a symbol which stands for the words following, viz., (something, anything) which reveals itself to our senses—it may be a house, or a horse, or the moon—and there is no such idea as the idea of perception. If the perception spoken of be the perception of the moon, then the phrase, “perception of the moon,” signifies “the moon perceived”—that is, the appearance, or form, or likeness of the moon, received or taken in through our organs of sight—in two words, a *seen moon*.

Locke was misled by taking it for granted that the operations which things perform upon us, are operations performed by us, or by our minds, upon things. Had he interpreted language by the realities of nature, instead of seeking to make nature conform to language, he could not have been led into such puerile error. All the operations (excepting speaking) which Locke supposed to be performed by the mind, are, in fact, only so many effects produced by things upon our nervous system. Even our internal sensations obey this law. Intoxication is an effect produced upon the nervous system by ardent spirit brought into contact with it, and here ardent spirit is the thing which things the drunken man to action, and produces and governs his conduct, and is the cause of the sensations which he experiences. A man who has taken tartar emetic experiences that internal feeling called sickness, and here tartar emetic is the thing which impresses or operates upon his nervous system.

The internal natural sensations are impressions made upon the nervous system by the other component parts of the body—of which *probably* the blood, in its various conditions,

and its properties varying as its condition varies, is the most influential.

#### OF WORDS ENDING IN NESS.

You will remember that our word *like*, formerly written *lic*, signifies the skin. Thus, when we say that John is *like* William, we do, in fact, say that John has the *skin* of William. What we mean is, merely that the skin of John (which is all we can see of John—and the external covering is all we can see of anything) affects our organs of sight in a similar manner to the skin of William. The phrase merely implies a comparison and resemblance. Thus we say, “such and such an one is a perfect brute.” But we do not mean that the man is actually a brute, but merely that he *resembles* a brute—that is, in his conduct. So when our ancestors said, “John has the skin of William,” they merely meant to institute a comparison, and denote a resemblance. They merely meant that John resembled William—that is, in his external appearance. Hence the word eventually came to be used as a general term, in order to denote a resemblance, or appearance, or similarity, of any kind. In like manner, the word *ness* signifies a promontory, or anything which juts out, and makes itself more plainly manifest than the other things wherewith it is surrounded. And thus, because that part of the coast which juts out into the sea, is the first portion of land which makes its appearance to those who are approaching it *from* the sea—and because mountain tops, and rocks, and tall trees, and all such things as jut out above or beyond other things, are the only appearances which are distinctly visible at a distance—and give a character, and stamp an individuality upon any landscape—constituting the appearance which distinguishes one landscape from another—the word *ness* eventually became a general term used to denote what we now denote by the Latin word appearance. Thus you will find that all our words ending in *ness* contain within themselves the sense of this word appearance. Thus, when I say, this picture is a good *like-ness* of John, the resolution will be—this picture has the appearance of the skin of John—or, the appearance of this picture is the appearance of

John. For both words are general terms, signifying *appearance*, as I have shown above. Thus

*Whiteness*—signifies, “the appearance of things which are white.”

White is the general name which we give to all those things which affect our sense of sight in a particular manner. Originally it was the particular name of some one particular thing, afterwards extended to signify all other things which resembled that particular thing. Let us suppose that one thing to be snow—for since every general term is the name of each one of the particulars of which the general is made up, the word white is as certainly the name of snow, as it is of any other white thing—and since we know it to have been originally the particular name of some one white thing or other, and afterwards to have had its signification extended to all other things resembling that one; and since all white things resemble one another more or less, it is a matter of no consequence of what particular thing we make it the particular name, so long as it be a white one. Supposing white, therefore, to have been the particular name of snow, then whiteness signifies the appearance of snow. But we do happen to know that the word white was originally the name given to what we now call foam. Therefore whiteness signifies the appearance of foam.

You perceive it makes no difference to the sense, or to the argument, whether I give to the word white the *supposed* meaning of snow, or its real meaning of foam.

*Thickness*—the appearance of things which are thick. When I say a thing possesses thickness, I merely assert that it affects my organs of sight after the manner of things which are thick. And thus a piece of canvass, whereon a book, or a brick, or any other thick object, is made to assume the appearance of prominence, does as truly possess thickness as a veritable brick—since it affects our organs of sight after the same manner—which is all the word implies. “But,” says Dr. Reid, “we know that the book on the canvass is not actually thick, but is a flat surface merely”—which only amounts to this—that the picture *resembles* a thick thing to the eye, but does *not* resemble a thick thing to the touch. The



word implies nothing more than resemblance to thick things—which may be more or less complete—and which resemblance may be recognised by one sense only, or by two. Dr. Reid speaks of the *idea of thickness*. But as there is no such thing as thickness, nor any such thing as whiteness, so neither can there be any such ideas as the idea of thickness, or of whiteness. There are *things* resembling *thick* things, and *things* resembling *foam*—that is, *white* things—and so there are *ideas* of these *things*. Which only means that there are certain things which always produce certain effects upon our senses, and that to these things we have given the additional names of white and thick in order to distinguish them from other things which affect our senses differently.

The phrase, therefore, *idea of whiteness*, when interpreted according to the realities of nature, and not according to the mysterious jargon of metaphysicians, simply means a white thing *seen*. And *idea of thickness* simply means a thick thing *seen only*, or a thick thing *felt only*, or a thick thing both *seen and felt*. A prominent object represented on canvass is a thick thing *seen*—that is, a something affecting our organs of *sight* (but not of touch) after the manner in which thick things affect the *same organs*.

Here is, you observe, an entire pane of glass. It now affects our organs of sight in one uniform particular manner. I strike it a smart blow with this stone, and there is now what we call a crack running quite through it. But it must be quite manifest to you that, in reality, there is no such thing as crack! I have merely tapped the glass with a stone. In doing this, I can have added nothing to it! nor taken anything from it! There is nothing there which was not there before. I have merely altered the relation between the several parts composing the glass. The idea I had before was the idea of a pane of glass. The idea I have now is still the idea of a pane of glass. But the glass, having had the relation of its parts altered, produces now a different effect upon my organs of sight. To mark this difference of effect I give the *same* pane of glass a different name. Before, its name was simply a pane of glass, or a pane

of glass entire—now, I call it (the same pane of glass) a pane of glass *cracked*—or a pane of glass with a crack in it. We talk of the idea of a crack. But all language, to be significant, must be interpreted by the realities of nature. When, therefore, we talk of the idea of a crack, our language must be interpreted to signify the idea of (something, anything) *cracked*. The idea is an idea, not of a crack, but of a *thing* cracked. Take away the glass, and what becomes of the crack? Take away the idea of the glass, and what becomes of the idea of the crack? But if there really did exist any such thing as the idea of a crack, then that idea would still exist after you had dismissed the idea of the glass. Therefore, although there be things which are cracked—which are *called* cracked—which go by the *name* of cracked—there are no such things as cracks. So, although there be things which are white, and things which are black, there are no such things as whiteness or blackness; and, of course, therefore, no such ideas as those of whiteness or blackness.

*Space*—since an idea is (something, anything) seen—or, in its more extended acceptation, recognised by some one or more of our senses, it is quite clear that we can have no idea of space. We can have ideas of two or more things standing apart, and of whatever things we can see between them—but no idea of space. I do not know the original thing of which the Latin word *space* is the name. But the English *equivalent*, viz. the word *room*, which is the Dutch word *ruim*, signifies a ship's hold. The Latin word *rima*, and the Greek *ruma*, and the English word *room*, and the Dutch *ruim*, are evidently but one word. Now the Latin word *rima* signifies a chink or crack. And as I have already shown you that there is no such thing as crack, so neither is there any such thing as space, or room, or chink.

Mr. E. Bushby, after admitting that there is possibly no such thing as space, gravely proceeds to assure us that we may obtain a *very* clear idea of it, nevertheless, by watching two bodies gradually approaching each other till they touch. Why, then, whoever *does* take the trouble to watch two such bodies,

will get an idea of two bodies approximating towards each other, and also an idea of whatever can be seen between them before they do touch—and that's all. This supposed idea of space is what Mr. E. Bushby calls a negative idea—that is, a no-idea. He could not have christened it by a more appropriate title. An idea is a thing seen, or otherwise recognised by our senses. But we can neither see, feel, hear, taste, nor smell space, and therefore there can be no such thing, nor any such idea. I say, no such thing—because the word thing signifies whatever can be recognised by our senses.

What is a well? A hole in the earth. But what is a hole? There is no such thing, nor have we any idea of any such thing. The word *hole* is like the word *crack*. We can have an idea of the earth round about the well, and of the sides of the well. But this is all. You might as well assert that you can have an idea of a washing tub independent of its sides and bottom. For what is a washing tub but a hole in wood, just as a well is a hole in the earth? Make the edges of a washing tub a mile thick instead of an inch, and its depth sixty feet instead of one, and what is it but a well sunk in wood? But can you form an idea of a washing tub independent of its sides and bottom? Clearly not. So neither can you form an idea of a well independent of its sides and bottom. The word *space* is in the same predicament. The words *hole*, *space*, *room*, *well*, *crack*, are only so many symbols standing for all those words, which would otherwise be necessary in order to describe the appearance which *things* present after the relation of these several parts has been altered. Etymologically the word *room* is a symbol standing for the words (anything, something) resembling a ship's hold. When you stand in a ship's hold, your view is bounded by the top, bottom, and sides—and of these, and these alone, we can have ideas. When you stand upon a hill-top, your view is bounded in like manner by the sky above, the earth beneath, and the horizon all round—and of these, and these alone, we can have ideas. To the whole scene, (whether in the ship, or on the hill-top) including the boundaries, and whatever is contained within them, we give the name *room*.



The scene from the hill-top is but a ship's hold of larger dimensions, and different materials.

It is quite clear that Locke and his successors used the word *idea* as a *mere word*, and a *mere word* only—a sound without sense—a sign signifying nothing. And, therefore, all their talk about ideas was only so much talk about the *word* idea, and not about any thing or things of which that word was the sign. This I say is quite clear—otherwise Mr. Bushby could never have supposed it possible to form an idea of space, even although there be no such thing as space in *rerum naturâ*—nor could the shrewd and sagacious Locke have suffered himself to be duped by the trickery of language into so monstrous a supposition as that which supposes us able to form an idea of nothing.

We get our idea of nothing, says Locke, by first summoning to our minds certain ideas of things, and then immediately dismissing them. What a curious mode of enriching our minds with ideas! How much should I be enriched in my purse by taking from yours twenty guineas, and immediately restoring them? The words *NO* and *THING*, although joined by the stroke of the pen, and placed in juxta-position by the printer, are yet as distinctly two words as though they had never been joined. You and the printer may join together the two words *no* and *man*, as we have already joined the two words *no* and *body*, and as the Latins joined the two words *ne* and *homo* into the one word *nemo*, which signifies no man or nobody. But when you have so joined the two words *no* and *man*, will that circumstance make them the less certainly two distinct words than they were before? Clearly not. House-breaker are not the less certainly two words because united by the hyphen—nor would they be were they united without the hyphen. But surely to have an idea of no-man signifies *not* to have an idea of any man—or, to have *no idea* of any man. And, by the same rule, to have an idea of *no-thing* means *not* to have an idea of anything—or, to have *no idea* of anything.

*Distance*—we can have no idea of distance, nor is there any such thing as distance. The word is a Latin present participle, signifying (something, anything) standing apart from (something, anything, else.) Of these things

standing apart we can have ideas, but not of distance apart from things.

*Number*—we can have ideas of *things* numbered, but not of number apart from things. The word number is a word merely, as the figure 7 is a figure merely—both being without signification until applied to things.

*Essence*—(something, anything) performing the act of eating. I maintain that this is the plain and only meaning of the word—and let those who use it in any other sense reconcile their use of it with common sense as they best can. The word is neither more nor less than a Latin present participle (a mongrel one, I admit) and signifies eating.

The reason why the word came to be used as we now use it is this. The act of *eating* is that which characterizes animals, and distinguishes them from all other things. Hence, when we speak of the *essence of a thing*, we mean that (whatever it is) which distinguishes that thing from all others—which stamps a character and an individuality upon it, causing it to be what it is. Thus the word was used to designate those essential oils which impart to certain vegetables their peculiar and characteristic odors, apart from the grosser matters of which the plants consist. The essence of peppermint is that which stamps a peculiar and distinguishing character upon the plant called peppermint, distinguishing it from all other odoriferous plants.

*Pain*—from *pinan*, to torment, to punish—that which those feel who are punished. This is the verbal meaning. If you want to know the meaning in nature, I must send you to your senses to inquire, in this case, as in the case of every other word. If there were any other thing in the universe which *resembled* pain, then, by calling that thing to your remembrance, I could thus, by means of words, give you an idea *resembling* pain, without sending you to your senses—as in the case of common objects of sight. But as pain has no similitude, I must send you at once to your senses for information as to the manner in which it reveals itself to the senses—as I must also do with regard to the commonest object of sight, supposing you had never seen anything else which, in the remotest degree, resembled it. Thus if you had never seen

anything, which in any manner bore the slightest resemblance to a poker, then nothing but a poker could give you the idea of a poker. Pain signifies the effect upon—the something done to—those who are punished. If you would know the meaning of these words, viz. “effect upon” or “something done to,” you must *experience* their meaning—words cannot TELL it—any more than they can tell what crack means.

*Will*—there is no such thing as will, nor can we therefore have any idea of will. The word, standing by itself, is a mere algebraical sign of other words, and means no more than x, or y, or z. What the particular words are for which it stands depends upon the sentence in which it is used; and the structure of the sentence depends upon the speaker. Thus, if I say, “I possess the will to eat,” I simply mean that I am *moved* to eat. What moves me? hunger. But if, although hungry, I have the will to refrain from eating; what moves me to refrain? The memory of the inconvenience which I have before suffered from eating—which latter motive, being the stronger, I obey. *Will* is a symbol used as the sign of whatever is the *cause* of our actions. It is a general term, and can, like all general terms, communicate no ideas until it has been reduced to a particular term. It is, like x, the sign of an unknown thing, and has no meaning until that unknown thing has become a known thing, and then it means *that thing* whatever it turns out to be.

All general terms are symbols standing for the *particular* names of a *whole class* of things. Thus the word *man* stands for that whole class of things called men. General terms can *excite* ideas, but they cannot *communicate* ideas—nothing can do that but particular names. Thus, the word *man* can bring the remembrance or idea of some man or other to the mind. But if there be in your mind the idea of some one man, and you desire to *communicate* that idea to me—that is, to make it *common* to us both—the word *man* cannot do it. In order to *communicate* that idea you must use a *particular term*, as Mr. Williams. *Man* is a mere symbol standing for *any and all* of the particular names of all men; and therefore cannot *point* to any one in particular more than another; and therefore



cannot communicate ideas. For all ideas are particular, and therefore can only be communicated by particular names.

So the word *will* is a general term for a whole class of things—viz. for whatever moves us to action. The act of willing, like the acts of seeing, hearing, &c., has been mistaken for an act performed *by* us, whereas it is an act performed *upon* us. If I am pursued by a mad bull, it is not I who will to run, but it is the bull which moves *me* to run. The first effect produced by the sight of the bull is upon my nervous system, which, in its turn, acts upon my muscular system, and sets me in motion. If, in running from the bull, I met a *greater* danger, that *greater* danger would move me in a contrary direction, and I should turn and face the bull.

B.

But what wills or moves the bull to pursue you?

A.

I do not know what the particular thing may be which has unduly excited his brain. But, whatever it be, it is some *thing* or other acting as an unnatural stimulus to his brain. And it is this which wills or moves him to action. What is intoxication, but temporary madness to all intents and purposes? And, in this species of madness, there can be no doubt, I suppose, as to what that *thing* is which *things* a man—that is, excites him—to his insane actions. In this case the *thing* which *things* him is alcohol. It is alcohol—which, not being one of the things ordained by nature to act as the stimuli necessary to excite him to action—to excite him to perform those actions which are necessary to the welfare of his being—alcohol, I say, not being one of the things between which and ourselves nature has established that proper relation which must exist between the stimulus and thing stimulated, in order to produce a wholesome effect, produces those unwholesome effects—those insane, that is, unsound, that is, unnatural actions which we see accompanying intoxication. In the case of the bull, some disordered condition—something producing an unnatural excitement—of the brain, is the *thing* which *things* him to pursue me—and this disordered condition of the brain, may be, like intoxication, only temporary—it may be produced by the hootings of boys, as we sometimes

see in the streets of London. And then the shouting of the boys is the thing which moves or wills the bull to action—which *breaks through the order*—which destroys *the natural relation*—which nature has established between the thing stimulated (the bull) and the stimuli destined to excite him to action, viz. the things wherewith he is surrounded, and which produce their effects upon him through the medium of his senses.

Animals are destined to preserve their being by the performance of certain actions, such as eating, drinking, escaping from danger, defending themselves from threatened injury, &c. In order that they may be induced to perform these actions, and not, by neglecting them, lose their existence, and so leave the ends of their creation unfulfilled—nature has established, by means of the senses, a certain relation between themselves and the things wherewith they are surrounded—thus enabling the things which present themselves to their senses to act as stimuli upon them, and so to determine their actions. Some things are repulsive stimuli—some attractive. The repulsive cause us to protect ourselves by avoiding them—the attractive to preserve ourselves by seizing them—both being equally necessary to the preservation of our being. The bull would be a repulsive stimulus, and would necessarily excite me to those actions necessary to avoid him. Food to a hungry man is an attractive stimulus, whose mere sight or mention is capable of producing that well-known effect called watering of the mouth.

As nature, for the purposes of preserving animal life, has established a certain relation between the nervous system and whatever things are brought into the necessary propinquity with it, whereby these things can produce each its natural effect upon it, which we call excitement; so also has she established a certain relation between the nervous system and the muscular system, whereby the former can produce that effect upon the latter which we call motion or contraction.

Why particular things should so act upon the nervous system as to produce particular effects—why repulsive things should cause us to perform one set of actions, and attractive things another—why or how they should *determine* our conduct, and excite to action in particular directions—we do not know. But

yet we *do know* as much about this as we do about *anything else*. For all we know about the commonest things, such as hearing and seeing—that a stone unsupported will fall—that fire will burn—that cork will swim—all, I say, that we know about the cause of *any of these things* is, that our senses inform us that *such is the fact*—that nature has ordered it to be so. The *whole of our knowledge* consists of the information of our senses. We cannot go a single step—not an inch—not a hair's-breadth beyond this—not even in that species of knowledge called mathematical.

With regard to the word *will*, our language would be just as complete without it, as with it—and without any other equivalent word. For we can always express what we mean when we use the noun *will*, by using a periphrasis with the verb *to move*. Thus, merely by getting rid of the *name* will, we get rid of the *thing* will, if there were any such thing. For if the thing *will* can, not only not be seen, heard, felt, tasted, or smelled, but not even spoken of, (which it cannot be without a name) surely the necessary conclusion is that there is no such existence. Instead of saying “man possesses a will,” we may say, “man can be both *moved* to action and to refrain from action.” I put it to all the world whether the latter sentence do not convey the same meaning as the former, yet in the latter there is nothing about will, nor any one word equivalent to the word will. The sentence merely asserts that man can be excited or moved. In the former sentence, therefore, in which the word will is used, (seeing that both sentences are significant *alike*) this word *will* can only mean *whatever things* excite or move men to action—and these may of course consist of almost anything and everything. We say, with equal propriety, “a man *will* eat,” and “an apple *will* fall,” if you cut the stalk by which it hangs. Do apples also possess this undiscoverable something called *will*? It seems to me there is as much reason to suppose an apple possesses will, because we say, “it *wills* to fall,” as that man possesses a will, because we say, he “*wills* to eat!”

### B.

Certainly not—for when you have cut the stalk of the apple it CANNOT HELP falling. Whereas we are, at all events accustomed to suppose, that whatever a man *wills* to do, he can also will *not* to do.



## A.

I beg your pardon—the apple *can help* falling when its stalk has been cut—just in the same way as a man *can help* committing murder. For if, while you divide the stalk with your right hand, you support the apple with your left, the apple will remain in statu quo, and will not fall. A hoard of gold, which I know to be kept in my master's bed-room, may induce me to commit murder. But the fear of punishment, operating at the same time, in a counter direction, may induce me to forbear. The instrument (in the instance of the apple) held in the *right* hand, is the thing whose tendency is to move the apple to fall; and the *left* hand is the thing whose tendency is to cause it to remain—that is, *prevent* its falling. And so the gold is the thing whose tendency is to move me to commit murder, but the fear of punishment is the thing whose tendency is to move me to forbear—that is, to *prevent* me—and thus, both I and the apple, by a similar counteraction of causes, remain in statu quo.

In the case of the apple there are two things concerned—the apple itself, which is the patient, and you who are an agent, operating upon it. It is the same with ourselves. We are the patients, and whatever things are brought within the necessary propinquity to our nervous system to enable them to affect it, are agents operating upon us, exciting us to action, and regulating our conduct.

The hope of reward and fear of punishment—are not these the moving causes exciting, *willing*, leading men to the practise of religious observances? Undoubtedly they are—and while these are able to produce a more powerful impression on men than the causes which move them in a contrary direction, they will be obeyed. But when the causes which excite to a contrary conduct act upon them with a superior intensity, then these *latter* will be obeyed.

Will, therefore, is a symbol standing for *whatever things move men to action*.

Of all the things which excite us to action, perhaps there are few more powerful than sounds—not only those sounds called words—but sounds of every kind. Observe the effect of the slamming of a door, or the postman's sharp, sudden, thump-

thump, upon a nervous woman. It will make her almost literally jump from her seat, and throw her into a universal tremor. The scratching of the nail on brown paper, the sharpening of a saw, the sudden report of an unseen gun just at your elbow, will all make a wonderfully strong impression upon your nerves. The effects of music are so extraordinary and universally admitted that I need scarcely mention them—and words falling from a musical tongue, can move men either to tears or madness with a power which is irresistible. And who among the wisest can listen unexcited to a well-told ghost story, or a tale of horror, although he has no belief in ghosts, and knows there is nothing in the tale of horror beyond the words in which it is conveyed? There are other stories, besides those of ghosts, which move us powerfully, but which yet consist of nothing but words.

Words constitute the great engine by which the few govern the many.

*Judgment*—To judge is to do what the judge or umpire does—and judgment is—whatsoever the judge or umpire *says*—his sentence.

*Attention*—(some one, any one) doing that which those things do which are *stretched towards anything else*. A man who is *paying attention*, is a man who leans forward, stretches himself out, in order to hear more distinctly—one who puts himself into the most convenient position to enable himself to be *thinged*, or impressed, in the *strongest* manner.

*Power*—which is nothing but the French *pouvoir*, to be able—is not the name of any idea—for there is no such thing as power, and therefore can be no such idea. The very use of the word should have been sufficient to prove this. For we are equally in the habit of speaking of the *power* to do, and the *power* not to do—the *power* of resisting, and the *power* of non-resisting.

When an osier twig has been bent, it possesses the *power* to recover its former condition. Here power signifies elasticity and elasticity signifies *power*. The elasticity of a twig is that *power* which enables it to straighten itself. *Power*, therefore, in the case of the twig, signifies *that which enables the twig to*

*straighten itself.* But I suppose it will not be denied that “that which enables elastic bodies to recoil” is simply the constitution of elastic bodies, and is no more than a law of their nature—that is, *that which nature has ordered* with regard to elastic bodies. So, with living beings, *power* is merely a symbol standing for that which enables animals to move their limbs—and that which enables them to do this is merely a law of their nature—and this last phrase amounts to no more than this, viz. that in the case of living beings, nature has ordered it to be so—and this in its turn, amounts to no more than simply this, viz. that we see it is so. For the phrase “law of nature” is only the name which we give to whatsoever we see to be invariable. A dog moves his limbs and is silent—a man moves his limbs and announces the fact either by saying, “I can move,” or, “I possess power;” and the word *power* is a mere symbol standing for whatsoever other words can give expression to “the fact that I can move or do move.” It puts the enunciation of the fact into the form of a name or noun, so that it can become the subject of speech. If, however, by power you understand the cause or reason why I can move, then the word stands for “that law of nature which declares that animal beings shall possess locomotion,” or by whatever other words you choose to give expression to “the fact that they are so constituted as that they can move.”

In a word, power is a symbol standing for the words, *the fact that (something anything) can move.*

We can no more have an idea of power, therefore, than of motion. We can have ideas of things moving; and of animals using their limbs—but not of motion or power—for there are no such things.

If the ordinary manner of expressing such questions as, “what is power?” were only changed a little in form, much, if not the whole, of the difficulty and puzzle would cease, because it solely arises from not understanding the real import of the question. All these questions should be put thus—“to what *reality in nature* does the word *power* direct my attention?” And the obvious answer is, not so many other words, but taking the inquirer by the hand and leading him whither this reality in



nature can reveal itself to his senses. But, in the case of power, this cannot be done—for we can neither see, nor hear, nor feel, nor taste, nor smell it. When, therefore, we appeal to our senses for a revelation of power they give no answer. We can see bodies *exercising an influence upon other bodies*. But this is a revelation of the act or fact, and not of power apart from these. It is the revelation of *something doing something* to something else—and that is all. If it be admitted for a moment that there is such a thing as power, how am I to obtain an idea of it? For I have proved over and over again that our senses are the only inlets to ideas, and that when the true idea cannot be got directly by the senses, we supply its place by a *similar* idea. But power, at all events, has no similitude! If there be any such existence as power, therefore, it is still wholly unintelligible, and is to us as though it were not. We cannot discourse, or reason intelligibly, about that of which we have no idea!

The not being able to get an idea or conception of a thing, (and the two words are interchangeably the same) is the only reason we have for denying the existence of anything. If you assert that there is a monster now standing before me, the only reason I can have for denying the assertion is, that I cannot cause him to reveal himself to my senses—and, if I call a dozen other men, so neither can any of these. I have precisely the same reason for denying the existence of power, will, mind, &c. The phrase “what is a thing?” means, (as I have before shown) “after the manner of what *other* thing does that thing reveal itself to our senses?” If, on appealing to your senses they make no revelation, not only no revelation of the thing itself, but also no revelation of anything resembling it—then that *no-revelation* is an answer to the question—and that answer is expressed in words by the word nothing.

What is nothing? Appeal to your senses. What revelation do they make? None. Then that silent no-revelation is the answer to the question. That silent *revelation of nothing* is—nothing.

Whatever cannot be made to reveal itself to our senses is nothing. For to be and to exist signify to *affect our senses after the manner of* something or other—to be, *after the manner of*

living animals—to exist, *after the manner* of rocks, stocks, and stones. Whatever, therefore, does not affect our senses in any manner at all (for us) *is not*, and *exists not*—and *not to be* is equivalent to *being nothing*.

But this does not prove that there may not be other existences (I am obliged to use this word, because we have no words capable of expressing things of which we know nothing at all. *Existence* means something, anything, affecting our senses after the manner of rocks—but I am here speaking of things, which are, in fact, *no things to us*—and therefore cannot affect our senses in any manner. But, if I speak at all, I must submit to the trammels of language—for I cannot even invent a word to signify an existence which does not affect our senses. For an existence which does not affect our senses is a contradiction in terms—and is equivalent to “*something affecting our senses which does not affect our senses.*”) But, as I was saying, this argument about nothing, and the revelations of the senses, does not prove directly that there are not certain beings in other planets endowed with other senses, which are capable of taking cognizance of *things* of which our senses can afford us no conception. There is the same objection to the use of this word *things* as there is to the word *existence*—but I cannot help it. It only shows that to *talk* intelligibly about whatever is not recognisable by the senses is impossible—that language is wholly incapable of affording us the means of doing so—and compels us at every step into the most absurd contradictions.

And herein, as it seems to me, those who have hitherto argued on this side, have committed a great mistake, and laid themselves open to a refutation (not indeed substantial) but still sufficiently apparent and specious to serve as an argument to those who, caring little for the truth, are always glad (when they can find nothing to say on their own side) of any argument and any opportunity which may serve to weaken the attacks of the enemies of their prejudices. All our knowledge is *positive*—and no man can attempt to prove a negative without using arguments which can easily be shown to be inconclusive. Whatever is, we can know. But here knowledge ceases. We cannot know that which is not—and, not knowing it, cannot prove it. Had

those who have attempted to prove that there are no such things as ghosts, been satisfied to prove that, whether there be or not, we can know nothing of them—nothing about the matter. That we cannot think of them—nor have any conception of them—nay, that we cannot even *converse* about them—that no language can furnish the means even of talking about them—that we cannot even invent a name for them without that name involving a contradiction in itself—and that to attempt to apply language to them is contrary to the very nature of language, and wholly out of its scope and power—their arguments would have come with the greater force.

*Time*—there is no such thing as time, nor can we have any idea of it. Time is the French *temps*, which is the Latin *tempus*. But we are only concerned with English words; and the English word for time is *tide*. In the older English writers the word is of constant occurrence. It is still preserved in such words as, Whitson-tide, Easter-tide, &c., that is, Whitson-time, Easter-time, &c. To eat three *times* a-day is to eat three *tides* a-day—to make three *tides* a-day instead of two—to eat as often as the tide would flow, were there *three tides a-day* instead of two. The coming and going of the food is compared to the coming and going of the tide, one additional tide being added to the ordinary number. A *long time* is a long tide—a tide longer in flowing than usual—a short *time* a short tide. What time is it? That is, what *tide* is it? That is, is the day a retiring tide? That is, declining *from* noon towards evening—or is it a rising tide? That is advancing from sunrise *towards* noon?

To be-tide—that is, to happen—‘I will go whatever betide me’—that is, I will go whatever the *tide* may bring to prevent me—whatever may be *tided* up—that is, whatever may do what the tide does, that is, *come* or *rise up*—to prevent me.

We measure the succession and recurrence of the ideas and events of years by the revolutions of the earth round the sun—of months by the revolutions of the moon round the earth—of weeks by the revolutions of the earth upon her axis—and our island ancestors measured the succession of ideas, and of the minor events of a single day, by the flux and reflux of the tide.



An instant of time—*instant* is a Latin participle, signifying *standing upon*. “I will not tarry an *instant of time*”—that is, I will not tarry—no, not so long as any given portion of the flowing waters constituting the tide stands upon any one given spot.

*Ghost*—the Anglo-Saxon word for wind, or breath. Our word *gust*—as *gust of wind*—is the same word without the *h*. We also say, a “*breath of wind*.” What is a ghost, then? Put your hand out of the window and you will feel it, if *the wind* is blowing. To give up the *ghost* is to give up the breath that is in one—that is, to cease to breathe. *Psyche*, the Greek word, which we translate by the Anglo-Saxon word *sawl*, now spelled soul, signifies wind or breath, from *psycho*, to blow or breathe. And the Anglo-Saxon *sawl* (now soul) signifies life. The word *animus*, from the Greek *anemos*, also means wind, or breath. Animals, therefore, are *things which breathe*.

*Life*—the Anglo-Saxon word signifying to live is *lybb-an*. The Arabic word *lub*, its root, signifies the heart—and thus *lybban* signifies to do what those things do which have hearts. And thus (*as is the fact*) *to be*, and *to live* have the same meaning—since the things which have hearts are also the things which have houses—that is, living things. Life, therefore, signifies that which is done—the actions which are performed—by things which have hearts—eating, drinking, moving, absorbing, circulating, secreting, &c. Life is a symbol standing for all these actions, and saving us the trouble of enumerating them on every occasion when we desire to make them the subject of speech. There are *things* which live and move, &c. &c.—but there is no such *thing* as life. Instead of saying, “animals can move, and eat, and absorb, &c. &c.” we say, “animals have life.” Life is the name given to the sum of all these actions.

*Honor*—I know not the intrinsic meaning of this Latin word.

But our *own* equivalent word, that is, the Anglo-Saxon, was *gethingth*, a part of the verb *gethingan*, to *speak well of—to praise*. *Gethingth*, therefore, or *honor*, which we have substituted for it, signifies, *whatsoever conduct men speak well of*, or praise; and is a symbol *standing for*

these or similar words. But some men praise *one* sort of conduct and some *another*. There is no such thing as honor, therefore—but all conduct is *honorable* which is *praised* by men. Corporal Trim thought it honorable to “allow three half-pence a-day to his parents out of his pay.” Had his parents been rich, he would have thought it equally honorable to *receive* it from them.

*Virtue*—a Latin word *standing for* whatsoever conduct the Latins thought more emphatically to become a *man*, in contradistinction from those which become a *woman*. *The Romans* thought this to be military bravery. *We* think there are other sorts of conduct which become a man even more than military bravery. With *us*, therefore, the word *stands for* whatsoever conduct *we* think most becoming either to man or woman. Both *honor* and *virtue*, therefore, are matters of opinion, contingent upon time, place, and circumstance.

*Memory*—whatsoever is remembered. But to remember is a modern word. The old word was *mænan*—and who can doubt for a moment that MÆNAN, to remember, and MÆLAN, to speak, are one and the same word? The substitution of one liquid letter for another, *l* for *n*, is not worth a consideration. For when there was nothing to guide the pronunciation but the ear, it would have been more strange had it *not* happened, than that it *has* happened. *To remember*, or, as we formerly said, and sometimes say still, *to be remembered* of a thing, signifies, therefore, *to be spoken to over again* by that thing. A figurative mode of indicating that effect which objects have upon us, which enables us to draw or describe them, when we no longer see them. If you want to know what that effect is, you must here, as in every other instance, appeal to your senses and they will *tell* you. In using this word *tell*, I use the same figure of speech which our ancestors resorted to in this very word *mænan*; and also in the phrase *methinks*—that is, *me telleth*, or something *tells me*. It seems to me both a very beautiful and very apposite figure of speech, when a man is *remembering* a thing, to say that that thing is speaking to him again. When he remembers what he has read or heard said,

then *words* are the things which *speak* to him *over again*.

Thus the true senses of the words remembering and thinking, and also the true *operations* which these indicate, form, I think, a beautiful and strongly confirmatory illustration of each other.

But, I have said, that all words, even verbs, are the names of things. Of what thing is the verb *mænan* the name? *Mæn* (*æ* broad like *a* in father) is the Anglo-Saxon word for man. *Mæn-an*, therefore, signifies to do what man does, and what nothing else but man *can* do, viz. to speak.

*Mean*—as the *meaning* of a word—and what a man *means* when he speaks. *To mean* is this same word *mænan*, to speak or remember. The participle *meaning*, therefore, signifies (something, anything) *speaking*. The phrase *meaning of a word* signifies (something, anything) *speaking to me* by virtue of the utterance of that word—that is, which the utterance of that word causes to *speak* to me—that is, causes me to *remember*. Whatever thing a word causes to *speak* to me—causes me to remember—is the *meaning* of that word.

The *meaning* which is IN THE MAN before he puts it into words, is the language which things are *speaking* to him before he speaks himself—that is, the things which he remembers. And when a man says, “I mean” so and so, he does but *tell* you, in words, what things, in their own peculiar language, are *telling* him.

And thus the *language of words* is, and can only be, a translation of the *language of things*.

Every other language is a language *without signification*.

*Know*—this is another most important word—the *insignificant* use of which has tended greatly to mystify philosophy; and the *significant* use of which will conduce much to the restoration of light. To *KNOW* signifies *to get*—sometimes *with* the prefix *be*, and sometimes *without* it.

I will just premise that we could do just as well without this word knowledge in the language as with it. Because we have several others which have the *same signification*—and these others all signify TO GET. Thus, *to per-ceive* is a Latin word signifying to take through, to acquire through—that is, through



the senses. To con-ceive is a similar word, also signifying to acquire, to take—both words being only the Latin word *capere*, to take, to get, with different prefixes.

To apprehend is also a Latin word, signifying, *to seize upon*, to get.

To inform signifies, to put into one the *forms of things*—to cause one to *acquire* the forms of things. And information (that is, knowledge) consists of the forms of things which one has *acquired*.

To learn is a compound Anglo-Saxon word, signifying, to seize upon, to acquire, that which is taught—from *lar*, the past participle of *læran*, to teach, and signifying, that which is taught, and *nerian*, to seize, or acquire.

The Latins had also equivalent words which they used as substitutes for *know*—and these, too, signify, to get. Thus *intelligo*, to understand, and *colligo*, which Pliny uses in the sense of *to know*, are nothing manifestly but the word *lego*, to gather, with different prefixes. We also say, “*I gather*”—that is, “*I learn*”—from what you say, &c.

The Anglo-Saxon word was *cnawan*, to know. But they also, as well as ourselves and the Romans, had equivalent words—and these equivalents signified *to get*. Thus *gytan* and *angytan* signified both *to get* and *to know*.

Anglo-Saxon,	}	Now I say that all these words are but variations of the one word <i>gen</i> , to get. In the Anglo-Saxon, the <i>g</i> being changed into <i>c</i> , and, in the English, into <i>k</i> . While in one of the Greek words it is omitted altogether. In one of the Latin words also it is sometimes omitted. <i>Gnosco</i> being now generally written <i>nosco</i> . They are all only so many different ways of writing the one Greek word <i>gen-nao</i> , to get, or be-get. And these differences in the manner of writing and speaking is merely owing to different postfixes.
<i>Cn-awan</i> , to know		
Greek,	}	
<i>Gn-o-o</i> ,		} to perceive
<i>N-oeo</i> ,		
<i>Gen-nao</i> , to be-get	}	
<i>Gign-osco</i> , to know		
Latin,		
<i>Gign-o</i> , to be-get	}	
<i>Gn-osco</i> , to know		
English,		
<i>To kn-ow</i> .		

*N-oemi*, to perceive—that is, to *acquire* through—that is, through the senses—is another form of the same word. From

this comes *n-oema*, a thought—that is, (something, anything) *perceived, taken in, through*—the senses. From *n-oeo*, to perceive—that is, to *take in through* the senses—comes *n-oos*, the Greek word for *mind*, and thus signifying, like *n-oema*, a thought, (something, anything) *taken in through*—the senses; and answering exactly to the sense which I have given to our own word *mind*—that is, (something, anything) *remembered*.

The Latin word for *mind* is *mens*, contracted from *menens*, and derived from a Greek word *mnao*, itself contracted from *menao*, signifying to call, to speak to, to admonish. *Mens*, therefore, is a present participle signifying (something, anything) *speaking to one*—that is, *remembered*. This word, therefore, as well as its Greek equivalent, has exactly the same meaning as I have asserted belongs to our word *mind*—since things which are *remembered*, as I have just shown you, and as the true sense of the Anglo-Saxon *mænan* proves, are figuratively said to be *speaking to us*.

*To know* is sometimes used in its original sense—the sense of *gigno*, to get or beget. It is so used in scripture. And the vulgar use it in that sense to the present day. To know a man carnally is to have offspring by him.

And what are the Greek *gin-omai*, to be, and the Latin *nascor*, anciently written *gn-ascor*, to be born, but passive forms of *genn-ao*, and *gn-osco*, to get, to beget? To be, to be born, and to be begotten—are they not the same? Here, too, is another instance of the truth of what I said sometime since, that *any* word will do to express what we express by the verb *to be*, so long as it necessarily suggests to the mind the *actions* of living beings. Thus, to do what those things do which have offspring, to do what those things do which build houses, to do what those things do which have hearts, to do what those things do which eat, which is the sense of the Latin *esse*, to be, and the Anglo-Saxon *wesan*, to be, from which we get our word *was*, are all modes of expression used to distinguish the manner in which living animal beings affect our senses from the manner in which they are affected by such things as rocks, stocks, and stones, and vegetable productions.

*To know*, therefore, signifies *to get*—by means of the senses—

to acquire or take in *the forms of things*, or impressions of things. And all *human knowledge* consists of the revelations of the *human senses*.

My sense of touch *has* informed me that fire *has* burned me. But my sense of touch cannot inform me that fire *will* burn me *again*. Yet *I know* that it will do so, and therefore I avoid it. But this knowledge—the knowledge that like causes will produce like effects—I also *get* from one of my senses—the sense called instinct. For I say the popular enumeration of the senses is the true one. There are seven. I have already numbered six. The seventh is *instinct*.

The five senses would be useless without memory. But the five senses, with memory to boot, would *also* be useless, had we not a seventh which urged us to avoid whatever we *remembered to have hurt us*.

All the seven, however, do, *de facto*, resolve themselves into but *one*, viz. *the effects produced by things upon us*. But much—very much—of our knowledge consists merely of a knowledge of words. Thus if I tell a clown that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, he does not know the fact—he only knows the words in which I have stated the fact. For all he knows, the statement may be false—and nothing can prove it true but an appeal to his own senses. To a man who has visited America, the existence of America is a revelation. If he return, and clothes the revelation in words, and communicates those words to me, then to me the existence of America is only a tradition—and the words of the tradition are all I know of America.

*Belief*—to-believe is nothing but the Anglo-Saxon *ge-leaf-an*, to grant, to allow, to take for granted. *Belief*, therefore, is (something, anything) *allowed, granted, taken for granted*. The difference between knowledge and belief is this. Knowledge is that which we get through our senses—belief is merely the *permission* which we give to words to stand to us in *the place of things*. Knowledge is the TRUTH ITSELF—that which one thinketh or thingeth—that is, that which thingeth one—that is, reveals itself to one's senses. Belief is merely *faith in words*—the *allowing* words to influence



our conduct instead of *things*. If you relate anything to me, and I believe you, and, if necessary, regulate my conduct accordingly, then it is manifest that I *allow* your words to stand to me in the place of *things*—I am then *thinged* by words. The relation which you have made may be false—but, whether it be or not, I *take it for granted*, or I *grant*, that it is true. But whether I shall take its truth *for granted* or not, must depend upon its conformity with the past experience of my senses. I cannot grant that to be true which is not TRUTH-LIKE. Knowing that things are, in all essentials, everywhere the same, and that all men are endowed with the same senses, I cannot *grant* that you or any man, has ever been *thinged* in a manner in which I know it to be impossible for myself to be *thinged*. But if there be nothing in your words to contradict the experience of my senses, then I *rely* upon your words—I *allow* them to stand to me in the place of things—in a word, I believe you—and regulate my conduct by that belief. He, therefore, who regulates his conduct by knowledge, does so in accordance *with reason*—that is, in accordance with the manner in which he himself has been *thinged* by *things*—that is, in accordance with the experience of his senses. He, also, who regulates his conduct by his belief, does so in accordance with reason, or *reasonably*, provided that which he believes, or *takes for granted*, be in *accordance with reason*—that is, in accordance with the experience of his senses. But he who regulates his conduct by his belief when that which he believes is not in accordance with the experience of his senses—that is, which is *not* in accordance with his reason—manifestly does so *unreasonably*. For reason, and knowledge, and the experience of the senses, are but so many different words signifying the same thing—viz. the revelations of things—the effects which things have upon our senses. He, therefore, who believes that which is in opposition to the experience of his senses, believes that which is in opposition to reason, and in opposition to knowledge. But knowledge, as I have already shown you, is the *truth itself*—and the truth is *knowledge itself*. He, therefore, who believes that which is in *opposition to knowledge*, believes that which is in OPPOSITION TO THE TRUTH. For reason, knowledge, and truth, are only three

different words derived from three different languages, Latin, Greek, and English, and all signify one thing, viz. that which reveals itself to our senses.

Whatever belief, therefore, is in opposition to the experience of our senses, is, if there be any meaning in words at all, also in opposition to the truth—or, a false belief.

If the word truth signify *that which is—that which does what those things do which exist, or are, or be*—that is, which affects our senses after the manner of those things which exist, which are, which be—then that belief which takes for granted *that which does NOT what those things do which exist, &c.*, must glaringly and undoubtedly be contrary to truth—that is, false. *Knowledge* comes in by all the senses indifferently—*belief* by the *ear* only. But the ear can give us *no knowledge* of anything but *sounds*. This consideration *alone* is sufficient to show the value of that belief which is unsupported by the evidence of the other senses. *Belief* is but *hear-say*, call it by what other name you will. But “*pluris est oculatus unus testis quam auriti decem*”—that is, “the evidence of one eye is of more value than the testimony of ten ears.”

#### B.

How does it happen that men so readily believe what is clearly in opposition to their reason—to the experience of their senses—and to the truth?

#### A.

The cause is manifest enough. Those who believe that which is in opposition to the evidence of their senses, and regulate their conduct accordingly, do exactly what the child does, who, having been frightened by the horrors of a ghost-story, refuses to go up-stairs alone in the dark—and for the same reason—viz. because *both* have suffered themselves to be influenced by *words*, which are words *merely*—without stopping to inquire whether what they have heard be in accordance with reason or not.

I have already touched upon the great influence which words exercise over us. This is strongly instanced in the case of romances. We know that the words of the romance are words *merely*—that they do not point to things—to realities—

that they are all false. And yet we cannot help being excited as much as though they were true. The writer of a romance does not *pretend* that his romance is true—but if he *did*, he would find plenty of believers, let his romance be as romantic as it might—provided always that the *interests*, and therefore the *fears* of his readers were intimately concerned in the fact of its being true or false. Witness the romance of Johanna Southcote, and other impostors, as Mahomet, &c.

They who suffer their conduct to be influenced by a belief which is contrary to reason, do what the romance readers do, viz. suffer themselves to be influenced by words which are words *merely*—which do not point to things—which are signs signifying nothing—as in the case of children and ghost-stories. Words which do *not represent* things, they nevertheless *allow* to stand to them in the *place* of things. Words which, in fact, signify *nothing*, they nevertheless *take it for granted* signify *something*. Bills of exchange which do *not represent gold*, they nevertheless take in lieu of gold—and prize them and talk of them as though they *were gold*—forgetting that bills of exchange which are not *convertible into gold* are *paper*, and nothing else *but* paper. And they and the children do this because they do not stop to *think*—that is, to *talk to themselves*—that is, to inquire whether what they hear or read be or be not in accordance with reason—whether the bills of exchange which are offered them be or be not representations of gold, and convertible into gold—or whether they be paper and paper *merely*.

But they who have made the inquiry have often failed to satisfy themselves, because they did not know the real import of such words as truth, reason, be, exist, spirit, mind, and many others of a similar nature—and could not therefore arrive at any clear ideas on the subject of their silent discussion—and thus suffered themselves to be mystified into an indefinable terror of they know not what, and an incomprehensible belief—they know not wherefore.



## CHAPTER XI.

## RIGHT.

*Right*—This word *right* is, I believe, the last with which I shall trouble you. I have reserved it to the last because it is one of the most important—one of those which are most frequently in men's mouths, as well as of those which are the least understood. I had intended to discuss *every* important word in the language; and having shown what must necessarily be the meaning of each (if it had *any meaning at all*) I then intended to go regularly through some of our best philosophical writers, moral, political, and metaphysical, and to show the absurd UNINTELLIGIBILITY of many of their dogmas, merely by reducing their words to an INTELLIGIBLE meaning. Thus, doing everything myself, I should have left nothing to be done by you.

I soon found, however, that the task I had marked out for myself was one which it would take years to execute. I have been obliged, therefore, to content myself with only a comparatively few illustrations of the great principle I would inculcate—and am thus compelled to leave *something* for you to do yourself—that is, to carry out the principle of no-abstraction into such words as I have omitted, and to apply that principle yourself to the dogmas which you hear and read. It was, I say, my intention to take you by the hand, and lead you the *whole way* along Horne Tooke's straight path, even to the end of the journey. I must content myself, however, with having only led you on a few yards further, and with having brought you *within sight* of the goal, if you will only use your eyes—and with having given you such plain directions as will, if you will only use your senses, insure your reaching it. You have only to remember a few great principles which are, of themselves, self-evident truths—

THAT WORDS CAN ONLY TELL WORDS, AND CANNOT TELL THE MEANINGS OF WORDS—WHICH ARE THINGS.

THAT ALL WORDS CAN POSSIBLY DO IS TO REFER US TO OUR SENSES.

THAT THE MEANINGS OF WORDS ARE THE LANGUAGE OF THINGS—THAT IS, THE REVELATIONS OF OUR SENSES.

All those words said to be the signs of abstract ideas are merely symbols which *stand for other words*, and must be translated into the words which they stand for before they can possibly communicate ideas or knowledge. And that those words which the symbol stands for must be again translated into things—that is, their meaning must be sought for by an appeal to the senses, and can only be acquired by a *revelation* of the senses—and that thus you must go on translating words into other words, until finally you have translated all general terms into particular terms, and thus have enabled your senses to translate those particular terms into the things which they represent.

THAT THE MEANING OF WORDS MUST NECESSARILY BE IN THE MIND OF THE MAN BEFORE HE SPEAKS, SINCE THE VERY OBJECT OF HIS SPEECH IS TO COMMUNICATE THE MEANING THAT IS IN HIM—AND IT IS SELF-EVIDENT THAT THERE CAN BE NOTHING IN A MAN'S MIND BUT THAT WHICH HE REMEMBERS—THE MIND ITSELF BEING A GENERAL TERM FOR ALL THAT A MAN REMEMBERS.

That the object of speech is to communicate knowledge—that the knowledge must be in the speaker before he can communicate it by words—and that all knowledge consists of that which a man remembers. If it were not so, then a man might know that which he has forgotten—which is surely absurd and impossible. Knowledge and mind are equivalent terms—and are constantly so used by Wiclif in his translation of the Bible—he using the word knowledge or wit, where modern translators use the word mind. Thus in Romans (viii. 7) the modern version uses the phrase “carnal mind,” which Wiclif translates by “the wisdom of the flesh”—both phrases being clearly equivalent with “*human knowledge*.”

If you will only remember these great principles, and that there is no such thing as abstraction, and that all human knowledge consists merely of that which has been *gathered* or gotten by the human senses, and MUST therefore be such as it is POSSIBLE for

the human senses to gather, you can have no difficulty in understanding the nature and true import of all words, and can be in no danger of imposition or mystification by the machinery of language. Remembering these things, you will possess an infallible test by which to gauge with the utmost accuracy the value of whatever you read or hear, and which will enable you easily and at once to detect the meaning or no-meaning, the sense or senselessness, of whatever dogmas are propounded to you; either orally, or in books by their authors. It is a philosopher's stone which instantly turns all that it touches, unmistakeably, either into nonsense or sense.

You will also remember that every word, in every language, was originally the name of some one particular thing, and is still the name of some *thing* or other—the only difference being that at first each was the name of *one particular thing only*, while many of them now are the name of a whole class of things—all that class of things which have some general resemblance to that particular *thing* of which each was at first the particular name. Thus our word *unless*, or *dismiss*, was originally the name of some *one* thing which had power to suggest to the mind those actions which are used when (some one, any one) dismisses (some one or something else). It is no longer the name of that *one thing*, but it is still the name of any and all of the things of that class—that is to say, any or all of those things which have power to suggest to the mind the actions in question. Thus if you use the word *dismiss*, and ask me its meaning, I tell you that it means an officer disbanding his regiment—supposing that to be the thing it suggested to my mind. The word is, therefore, (for the time and occasion) to me, the name of that thing. But to another man it might suggest some *other* thing, but it would certainly be something which we are accustomed to see perform those actions which we suggest by the word dismissal or dismission.

These words, therefore, although the names of things, cannot *communicate* ideas, although they can *excite* them—because the ideas which they excite in different men will be ideas of different things.

I will just give you a familiar instance of the mode of apply-



ing this test in argument, and then proceed with the word right.

Suppose the proposition be, "is virtue commendable?" To this I reply, at once, that the question is as insignificant and idle as though you had asked me whether fiddledidee be the father of Amsterdam—or whether  $x$ ,  $y$ ,  $z$ , be commendable? What do you mean by virtue? For you might as well require me to argue about the  $A$ ,  $B$ ,  $C$ , and the  $D$ ,  $E$ ,  $F$ , of mathematicians, without showing me the figures represented by these letters—you might as well ask me whether  $A$ ,  $B$ ,  $C$ , be equal to  $D$ ,  $E$ ,  $F$ , and require me to argue the question with you, without letting me know what figures or diagrams are represented by these letters, whether they be angles, squares, or circles—as to expect I can reason with you about virtue, without letting me know what the word virtue represents. Translate it into *the words which it stands for* in your mind—show me the figures which it represents—that is, *define* the word virtue according to your acceptation of its verbal meaning.

B.

By virtue I mean, "whatever actions become a man."

A.

Very well—you have now translated the symbol into the words which it stands for. You must now translate these latter *into things*. That is to say, you must enumerate all those *particular actions* which, according to your notion, become a man—because different men have very different notions on this subject. The Romans and our Anglo-Saxon ancestors thought nothing so much became a man as military valour. You must mention their particular names, therefore, and thus cause me to remember them, and enable me, as we say, to see them with my mind's eye. I shall then know exactly what you mean by the word *virtue*—but not till then.

But still the question, even then, will not be intelligible. I shall want to know what you mean by commendable?

B.

I call that action commendable, whatever it be, which men *ought* to perform.

A.

Surely—but that which is *ought* by any one, is that which he

*owes*. But whatever we *owe* we must *owe* to *some one*. To whom is the *debt due* in this instance? To whom do men *owe it* to praise this or that particular action?

B.

To themselves—to the respect which they have for themselves, and for their own welfare and happiness.

A.

Ay! to be sure. And now the question is perfectly intelligible, and resolves itself simply enough into this, viz. “are such and such particular actions calculated to effect the happiness and welfare of men?” A question which an appeal to our senses will answer without the slightest difficulty or quibble. I will now proceed with *right*.

The English word *right*, with the Italian equivalent *ritto*, says Horne Tooke, is nothing but the Latin past participle *rect-um*, and of course signifies the same thing—viz. *that which is ordered or commanded*. While the other Italian words *d(i)ritto*, *dritto*, with the old French *droigt*, and the modern *droit*, are nothing else but the Latin past participle *di-rect-um*, which is itself only the word *rectum* with a prefix, and signifies the same thing, viz. *that which is ordered, commanded, or directed*.

Now it is quite true, as H. T. says, that all these words are but different ways of spelling the one word *rectum* or *di-rectum*, and that *rectum* or *di-rectum* signifies *that which is ordered or commanded*. But even this word *rect-um* or *di-rectum*—this Latin past participle—is but another way of writing the Anglo-Saxon word *riht* or *ge-riht*, which is only the past participle of *riht-an* or *ge-riht-an*, to order, direct, command, and therefore signifies, like all the others, *that which is ordered or commanded*. In the Latin *di-rectum*, and the Italian *di-ritto*, afterwards contracted into *dritto*, and *droit*, the prefix *di* is substituted for the Anglo-Saxon prefix *ge*.

Here, then, is another language—the Anglo-Saxon—added to Horne Tooke’s list of proofs. In like manner, says he, our word *just* is but the Latin *just-um*, which is the past participle of the verb *jubere*, to order, to command, and signifies *that which is ordered or commanded*. *Right* and *just*, therefore, have both but one signification. And it is remarkable that the

Anglo-Saxon word for what we call *just* was still this same word *riht* or *ge-riht*. Our word *right-eousness* is but the Anglo-Saxon *riht-wisness*. While *riht-end* and *riht-ere* signified a ruler, a commander, a governor.

They had another word signifying *just* which also signified *powerful*, viz. *dom-ige*. *Metod domige!* is translated, "O! just (or powerful) Creator!" But its true rendering is, "O! Creator who dost *order* and *command*"—all things! For *dom-ige* is but *dom* with a suffix—and *dom* is but the past participle of *deman*, to judge, to think, to examine, (as one examines a witness) to doom, to condemn—in a word, to do what the judge does—that is, to *pronounce* sentence, to *command* one to be punished—all of which are only so many words signifying *to speak*, which is the literal meaning of *deman*—or rather I should say the *meaning in nature*. This word *domige* (just) also refers therefore to *ordering* and *commanding*—speaking or uttering a *command* or *order*—as the judge does.

It is remarkable that this word *dom*, which literally signifies *that which is spoken*, is the Mæso-Gothic word signifying *the mind*. This tallies exactly with what I have already said of *mind* and *remembering*—for *that which is remembered* is *that which is spoken to us*—by things. *Right*, therefore, as well as *ritto*, *diritto*, *dritto*, *droit*, is an old English word signifying *that which is ordered* or *commanded*—and *just* is a Latin word signifying the same thing.

"A *right* conduct is, that which is *ordered*."

"A *right* reckoning is, that which is *ordered*."

"A *right* line is, that which is *ordered* or *directed*—(not a random extension, but) the shortest between two points."

"The *right* road is, that *ordered* or *directed* to be pursued (for the object you have in view)."

"To do *right* is, to do that which is *ordered* to be done."

"To be in the *right* is, to be in such situation or circumstances as are *ordered*."

"To have *right* or *law* on one's side is, to have in one's favor that which is *ordered* or *laid down*."

"A *right* and *just* action is, such a one as is *ordered* and *commanded*."



“A *just* man is, such as he is *commanded* to be—*qui leges jura que servat*—who observes and obeys the things *laid down and commanded*.

“The *right* hand is, that which custom and those who have brought us up have *ordered* or *directed* us to use in *preference*, when one hand only is employed: and the *left* hand is, that which is *leaved*, *leav’d*, *left*; or, which we are taught to *leave out* of use on such an occasion. So that *left*, you see, is also a past participle.

“Mr. Locke says, “God has a right to do it—we are his creatures.” But it appears to me highly improper to say, God has a *right*; as it is also to say that God is *JUST*. For nothing is *ordered*, *directed*, or *commanded* concerning God. The expressions are inapplicable to the Deity; though they are common, and those who use them have the best intentions. They are applicable only to men; to whom alone language belongs, and of whose *sensations only words are the representatives*; to men, who are by nature the subjects of *orders* and *commands*, and whose chief merit is obedience.

“I have always been most obedient when most taxed with disobedience. But my *right* hand is not the *right* hand of Melinda.\* The *right* I revere is not the *right* adored by sycophants; the *jus vagum*, the capricious *command* of princes or ministers. I follow the *LAW* of God (what is *laid down* by him for the rule of my conduct) when I follow the *LAWs* of human nature; which, without any human testimony, we know must proceed from God; and upon these are founded the *rights* of man, or what is *ordered* for man. \* \* \* \* I acknowledge the *senses* he has given us—the *experience* of those senses—and *reason* (the effect and result of those senses and that experience)—to be the assured testimony of God, against which no human

\* “I remember to have read in a voyage of De Gama’s to Kálecute, (the first made by the Portuguese round Africa) that the people of Melinda are all *left-handed*.

#### H.

With reference to the *European* custom the author describes them truly. But the people of Melinda are as *right-handed* as the Portuguese; for they use that hand in preference, which is *ordered* by their custom, and *leave out* of employ the other; which is therefore their *left* hand.”—*Horne Tooke*.

testimony ever can prevail. And I can discover, by the help of this etymology (of the word right) a shorter method of determining disputes between well-meaning men, concerning questions of RIGHT; for, if *right* and *just* mean *ordered* and *commanded*, we must at once refer to the *order* and *command*—and to the AUTHORITY which *ordered* and *commanded*.”—Horne Tooke.

If the laws of man, laid down for the regulation of my conduct, be in opposition to the laws of God—that is, the laws of human nature—for the laws of nature are, beyond all possibility of doubt or cavil, the laws of God—to which should obedience be rendered? “I will hold fast,” says Horne Tooke, “by the *higher authority*.”

If those who accustom themselves to speak slightly of the laws of nature—branding them with such epithets as *vile*, *bestly*, *filthy*, *contemptible*, &c.—would remember that the word *nature* in all such phrases as the *laws of nature* is only another name for GOD—and that these same vile and filthy laws are, beyond the possibility of equivocation, God’s own ordinances—they would, I think, be less loud in their impudent abuse, and less scurril in their application of names to the institutions of the Creator—institutions whose wondrous perfections they have neither the sense to perceive, nor the understanding to admire. But, like educated parrots, they know not what they say.

LAW, therefore, (that which is *laid down*, either in writing or otherwise) and RIGHT (that which is *ordered*) are two words of precisely the *same import*. The RIGHT, therefore, is the LAW. Human *rights* are human laws, or the laws of man. Natural *right* is the natural law or the law of nature—that is, the law of God. There is no such thing, therefore, as that which is called abstract, universal, right. There is no such thing, either as Dr. Samuel Johnson’s sacred, indefeasible, inherent, hereditary, rights of kings; or Mr. Thomas Paine’s inherent, inalienable, rights of man. These words are words *merely*. For if I ask either of them for their *meaning*—APART FROM ALL WORDS—they can, neither of them, show it me. I say the word RIGHT (setting aside the presumptive evidence derived from its etymology) *must* either have *this meaning*, or no *intelligible* meaning at all. Reason requires it—and the very purpose of speech demands

it—for, if it have not this meaning, it loses its power of COMMUNICATING knowledge, and is no longer a word—having no longer the power to serve the purpose of a word. Suppose you deny that this is its meaning. Very well—then I require to know what is its meaning—I require you to put its meaning INTO ME! How can you do this? You cannot do it! *Words* will not do it. You may translate the *word* right into a dozen different languages, or into two dozen different *equivalent words* in your own language. You may pile definition upon definition, and metaphor upon metaphor, and illustration upon illustration. But *words* are *not* what I *want*—nor definitions of words—nor metaphors—nor illustrations. But I want the MEANING of the word—the meaning alone—APART FROM ALL WORDS—that is, the *thing* signified *apart* from the *sign*. I desire you to *dismiss* the sign, and to show me the THING. If there be no THING of which your word right is the sign—then it is clear enough that your word is the sign of NOTHING! Neither will it serve your purpose to tell me that Mr. So-and-so uses the word in this sense, and Mr. Such-a-one uses it in such another sense. For since different writers attach to it different meanings, it is evident that the meaning which each attaches to it is but the meaning according to that particular writer's *opinion*. But I am not inquiring after an *opinion*!—but after a matter of fact—*independent of all opinion*! One man says it is RIGHT to pass such a law. Another man says it is *not right*. What does the word *right* here signify? Is it not manifest that it means *opinion*, and nothing else? All that the one man means is, that it is his *opinion* that the law should be past—the other, that it is his *opinion* that it should *not*. For—except *opinion*—either his own, or other men's—what *authority* has he to show that it should be past? But we are here concerned with MORAL MATHEMATICS which flout at all opinion, and will be satisfied with nothing but a *demonstration of truth*. It is no wonder that there is no end to the arguments between rival factions about the rights of men, as the phrase goes. For, using the word right merely to denote their own opinion, and each party having no standard—no *unquestionable* proof—no *indisputable* authority—to offer in favor of its own—*no demonstration*—the necessary



consequence is that neither can convict the other of error—and each maintains its own opinion, and rails at and abuses the other for doing the *same thing*. If you ask these men the meaning of any one of those abstract nouns (as they are called) such as the word right, or mind, or idea, all you will get will be a quantity of other words. Ask a follower of Horne Tooke the same question, and how different will be the answer! Instead of words, he will give you *demonstration*. He will cause you to SEE its meaning! or to hear it, or feel it, or taste it, or smell it, with your own proper bodily senses. Surely if men will reject a system *like this*—so simple—so intelligible—so *mathematically unequivocal*—it can only be because they prefer the darkness rather than the light—mysticism rather than the truth!

You cannot state any one moral proposition involving this word *right* (used as it ordinarily is) which could not be, and which *would* not be, *disputed*—which dispute would necessarily be interminable, because INCAPABLE of a final and unquestionable decision. Now mark the difference. Let the word be employed in its legitimate sense, and then I say, there is no such proposition which can be stated, about which any dispute can be raised, which cannot be set at rest at once. For if you assert that you have a *right* to do so and so—that is, that you are *ordered* to do so and so—and if I dispute it—all you have to do is to *show* me the *order*—either human or natural—and there is an end of the dispute. You merely asserted that you *had an order*, and no more—and you prove the truth of your assertion by *ocular demonstration*, i. e. by showing me the order—written or otherwise.

B.

But suppose you have a *human order* to do that which is in opposition to a divine order—that is, a law of nature?

A.

Then I shall obey the law of nature. For instance, I, being a servant, have a right to obey the orders of my master—that is, am ordered to do so by the laws of the country, and the agreement which I have made. But if he order me to put my hand in the fire, shall I obey him? No. Why not? Because this human order or law would be in opposition to a natural order or

law—viz. that which is *laid down* by nature for my happiness and welfare—the law of self-preservation or self-love. But the question is not, “what is right?” for this is merely asking, “what is ordered?” without reference either to natural or human orders, one more than the other. But the important question is, “what are those particular orders which I—ought—to obey? And then comes the question, “to whom or to what do I—owe it—to obey this or that law, in preference to others.

#### MORAL MATHEMATICS, OR HUMAN DUTIES.

From what I have said it is plainly apparent that the words “natural right,” or “Law of nature,” (if they mean anything at all) signify (something, anything) *laid down or ordered by God*.

Before I proceed with my moral mathematics I think it proper to give you my reasons why I shall make no reference to the sacred writings. They are two-fold—first, because it is unnecessary—and secondly, because any arguments drawn from that source would defeat their own object, and therefore be absurd.

First, it is *unnecessary*. Because, if what I inculcate be false, then it can in every instance be *shown to be so*, without reference to scripture. And if what I say be *true*, then it will be acknowledged on all hands that scripture itself cannot make it false.

Secondly, arguments drawn from that source would defeat their own object, and therefore be ridiculous. For, he who writes to inculcate the truth does not address himself to any one particular handful of men, but to the whole of the eight hundred millions who inhabit the surface of the earth. For the truth is universal—not particular—nor peculiar to any age or climate, or people. He addresses himself to men of every color, every language, every climate, and every creed; and his arguments must therefore be drawn from sources which *all men* acknowledge to be indisputable. For if the truth be desirable to *any*, it is desirable to *all*.

This work, for aught that I can tell, may be translated into the Chinese tongue, or the language of the Hindu Brahmins.

But with the Chinese and Hindu Brahmins, any arguments drawn from the particular scriptures of the christians would *not only have no weight* in favour of the truths I seek to inculcate, but would absolutely be held by them to be so many arguments *against me*—since they are taught to believe by *their* sacred writings that *our* sacred writings are altogether *false*.

All arguments, therefore, not only *for*, but *against*, any of my positions must be such as men of *all creeds* will *acknowledge to be sound*. Otherwise the work becomes a dead letter not only to many, but to an immense *majority* of the earth's inhabitants. And the term "*mathematics*" applied to any part of it would be an absurd misnomer. What would be thought of a Turkish author who should attempt to erect a science upon the authority of the Koran?

It appears to me that this argument in favour of no allusion to scripture in matters of philosophic argument is perfectly unanswerable. For instance, I am ostensibly arguing with you, Mr. B. But as no one knows who you are, you may chance to be the Turkish ambassador, or a Jew, or a disciple of Confucius; at all events, nothing can be more probable than that you may be a disbeliever in the christian scriptures. In either case it is quite manifest, that any attempt to instruct you by arguments drawn from an authority which you do not acknowledge, must be ineffectual.

Arguments drawn from the christian scriptures can have no weight with any but christians.

B.

How are we to know a law of nature when we see it?

A.

By observing (as far as human observation can go) its universality. We have no other PROOF whatever, even in the case of those which are universally admitted to be laws of nature, excepting only this, that human observation, as far as it can go, has *observed* the fact to be universally so. For Newton's law, viz. that every particle of matter attracts every other particle, &c. &c. is *not a proven law*, but a *presumed* law—amounting to *strong probability* and no more—since it cannot even be *sought to prove* it excepting only by *presumptive evidence*.



It is a law of nature that stones shall fall to the ground. Why? Because the fact demonstrates itself universally to the human senses. If stones fell to the ground to-day and rose up into the air to-morrow—or if they fell in England, but rose through the air in Turkey—then we should at once *deny* that it is a law of nature that stones shall fall to the ground. The laws of nature are nothing more than *observed phenomena*—observed to be universal, both as to time and place, as far as human observation can go. Whatever natural phenomena, therefore, are observed to be universal, we call laws of nature—which is only a shorter way of asserting that it is *ordered or laid down by God* that it shall BE so, and not otherwise. Sometimes these observed phenomena are called self-evident truths—as for instance, the fact, that the whole is greater than any one of its parts. They are all only so many truths or facts—that is, so many IS-SO's, or OR BE-SO's, or SHALL-BE-SO's—so many ITA-FIATS—which reveal themselves to our senses.

It is a law of nature that the spaces travelled through by falling bodies shall increase as the squares of the times increase—that the extrication of heat shall be followed by diminution of bulk, with the single exception of freezing water. But why are these called laws of nature? There is no other reason whatever, excepting that human experience proves the *fact* to be universally *so*, and not otherwise.

Now it is upon such as these *observed phenomena* that all human reasonings are built. And why not the reasonings concerning moral and political government? For there are certain observed natural phenomena which relate directly to the conduct of men, which are as *universal and invariable* as any phenomena in the universe. If the science of human government (both moral and political—but why use *both* these words? they signify the same thing—*morals*, the manners of men—*politics* the manners of men *living in cities*) be *not* founded on these observed phenomena—these laws of God—then they can only be founded on *human opinion*. But what! shall we reject human opinion as wholly insufficient to form the foundation of any other science, however trivial, and yet admit it as the basis—the be-all and end-all—the alpha and omega—in all our reasonings concerning the

science of human happiness? We should laugh almost in a man's face, who should offer us a theory, though it did but concern the shoeing of horses, or the boiling of potatoes, could he offer us, in support of it, nothing but opinion. Yet British senators sit and listen hour after hour, and year after year, to sesquipedalian arguments on the question of human government with a view to human happiness, which arguments it is not even attempted to place upon any more solid foundation than the opinions of the orator and his party! Were the question, how to discover a new power for the propulsion of rail-road carriages, such arguments would be absolutely ridiculed! The proposer of a new power would be expected to detail clearly all the *natural laws* peculiar to that new power, and to show how these natural laws operated so as, of necessity, to produce the desired results. But if he could give nothing but *opinion* in reply to this expectation, his auditors would either go quietly to sleep, or very properly cough him down for wasting the time of the House.

The law of self-love is as incontestably a law of nature—that is, a law *laid down by the great Contriver and Creator of the universe for the regulation of man's conduct*—as the law of gravitation or of definite proportions.

The great ultimate law—the final cause of all—is the preservation of the UNIVERSAL WHOLE—in all its grand essential characteristics—SUCH AS IT IS. If the universality, both as to time and place, of an observed fact, can constitute a law of nature, then this is surely one. Up to the present moment, astronomers have been unable to discover by their planetary observations, any principle of change—or any token either of a beginning or an ending, with regard to the planetary system. On the contrary, the most accurate mathematical reasoning proves that this system not only will, but *must* continue as it is through indefinite ages. “So that the system,” says Herschel in his beautiful discourse on the study of Natural Philosophy, “can never be destroyed or subverted by the mutual action of its parts, but keeps constantly oscillating, as it were, round a certain mean state, from which it can never deviate to any ruinous extent.”

In order to accomplish this great ultimate law—viz. the self-

preservation of the whole—the *parts*, (i.e. the minor systems) whereof the *whole* is composed, are put in subjection to certain *individual laws* for the self-preservation of each individual part, or system, that so, by insuring the self-preservation of each individual system, the self-preservation of the *whole* aggregate of systems may be insured.

Thus all the lesser laws, for the determination of man's conduct, have plainly, for their ultimate object, the fulfilment of the great ultimate law, or final cause—the preservation of the whole. The great law of self-love is *necessary* to the *preservation* of the individual. The preservation of the individual is *necessary* to the preservation of the species—and the preservation of the species to the preservation of the whole—whereof both individuals and species are integrant parts. For all the forms of matter, both organic and inorganic, which make up the sum of this earth, as well as the earth itself, are manifestly but so many integrant parts of the whole universe.

We eat, drink, &c., that we may live—we live that the species may be perpetuated—and species are perpetuated that the universe may be preserved, *in all its essential parts*, entire—that so the purpose of the great Designer of the *definite whole* may be accomplished.

The fundamental law, therefore, with regard to animals (whether brute or human) is self-love. It is the basis of all the other laws concerning them—which, being fulfilled, the rest are necessarily accomplished—and which, being broken, to a greater or less extent, all the others, to a greater or less extent, are broken also. And he who offends against the law of self-love, offends also against all the others, and against the purposes both of his creation and his Creator.

The law of self-preservation is not peculiar to animals. It pervades the whole system of the universe. What is the law which holds the earth in her orbit—the law of gravitation, as it is called—but this same law of self-preservation?—this same conservative law, which being suspended for a moment, or annulled entirely, the destruction of the earth, as a separate system, must inevitably follow? Here the law of self-preservation is the fundamental law on which the earth's existence



depends. With the animal system, self-love is the fundamental law—the law on which the existence of the *animal* system depends—and which being annulled, the animal system must inevitably perish.

The occasional changes which have taken place on the earth's surface, whereof one is recorded, and which may, and most probably will, occur again, with that consequent extinction of certain species of animals and vegetables—can only be regarded as slight periodical deviations from the general law, precisely analogous to the “oscillations” or perturbations, observable among the planetary motions, while the “mean state” (in both) is “absolutely invariable.”

How senseless, therefore, is the clamor of those who rail at this same self-love or selfishness, as something detestable—and laud to the skies a *fancied disinterestedness* which has *no existence*, and which, if it did exist universally, as they would have it, could have no other result than the utter destruction of the human species. They rail, with open throats, at him who fulfils the laws of his Creator, and praise only him who *seems to them* to set his laws at defiance. But were they capable of reflection, they would know that the very praise which they lavish on this so-called disinterestedness, has its origin in self-love alone. For why do I love him who has sacrificed his own interests to mine? Is it not clearly because I prefer my *own* to *his*? Because the sacrifice of *his self-love* is the gratification of *mine*? But we are pleased with the semblance of disinterestedness even when our own interests are not *immediately* concerned. Why? Because (believing in its possibility) we like the *principle*—and for the same reason that poor citizens admire the principle of erecting alms-houses, since the time may come when *themselves* may be glad to *profit by them*. There is no such thing as disinterestedness. The man who gives a penny to a beggar does so, either from pride and self-consequence, or to relieve himself from a painful feeling. The beggars themselves are quite conscious of this latter cause of charity, and therefore take care to make that feeling as *painful* as possible, by exhibiting their sores and their unshod feet, and by surrounding themselves with as many miseries as they can.

## B.

According to you, then, it is right that men should be selfish.

## A.

Not according to me, but according to the law of the great lawgiver of the universe. It is by him so *ordered*, and you have only to look abroad to see the *order* in the course of constant and universal fulfilment. Obedience to this law is a human duty. For a duty is *that which one owes*—and obedience to the law of self-love is *that which we owe* to our Creator as well as to ourselves. To obey the law of self-love is to contribute *our share* towards the accomplishment of his purposes. We owe it also to *necessity*, to obey this law—for it may well be doubted whether we can help it. And in spite of the variety of terms and phraseology with which the foolish out-cry raised against it induces us to cloak and disguise it, obedience to this law will be discovered to be the mainspring of all our actions by any and every unjaundiced eye. The very perfection of the law—its simplicity—its perfect efficiency—stamps it at once as divine. It provides for the well-being of ALL, by insuring the well-being of EACH. How different from the complexity and inefficiency of any human law !

Parental affection is another natural law, also necessary to the preservation of the entire whole. For if parents (whether brute or human) were not compelled by this law to feed and protect their offspring, the offspring would perish. And so the animal system become extinct. The two laws, therefore, are equally necessary, and equally subserve the same purpose.

Filial affection is not a distinct natural law. It is but one of the countless modes in which self-love manifests itself. The offspring loves its parent because the parent administers, or *has* administered, to its wants. In loving the parent, it does but love the support and self-gratification *proceeding from* the parent. In fearing to lose the parent, it does but fear to lose the *parent's support*. There is no such law as filial affection, because there is no necessity for it, because it could in no way conduce towards the accomplishment of the great ultimate law. There are no laws acting in a retrograde direction. Beginning to exert their influence with the beginning of life, they have all an *onward tendency* towards

the accomplishment of the ultimate law. When the parent has reared his offspring he has accomplished the final cause of his earthly existence, and soon dies. While the child proceeds onward to run the same race, to fulfil the same final cause, and, having done so, dies too. And by this simple contrivance, although individuals are constantly disappearing, the several species still endure, and the animal system still continues to make an integrant part of the universe for ever—and thus the law for insuring the unchanging integrity of the universal whole is fulfilled. This end would be equally well accomplished whether the offspring love the parent or not—consequently there is no especial law provided to compel him to do so. But, if the parent did not love the offspring, and feed and support it, then this end could *not* be accomplished. In this case, therefore, nature *has* provided a special law to compel the parent to do so—the law of parental affection.

The various ties which bind men together in small communities—the reciprocation of services—are all merely so many manifestations of self-love. For “self-love and social are (undoubtedly) the same.”

Since the law of self-love, therefore, is the fundamental law upon which the fulfilment of all the other natural animal laws depends—it follows that to obey this law is to obey all the others—and is, in fact, to do all that in us lies towards the accomplishment of the Creator’s great design—the preservation of the whole.

And thus all questions of individual obedience resolve themselves into questions of individual happiness. And all questions as to whether an individual *ought* or *ought not* to perform this or that action, resolve themselves into the question whether that individual *OWE IT*, or do not *OWE IT* (which is the meaning of the word *ought*) to his happiness to do so. And thus all questions of human individual duties resolve themselves into questions of what each individual *owes* or does *not owe* to his own individual happiness or self-love. And, indeed, even religious duties (although I am here not at all concerned with such) necessarily resolve themselves into the same question. For why *ought* men—that is, to what do men *owe it*—to be



religious? Beyond the possibility of contradiction, to their self-love—to their desire of eternal happiness and dread of eternal punishment. If they had no hope of happiness, and no fear of punishment, would they be religious? or suffer, as they have done, and continually do, for religion's sake? Yet this law—which is the cause and foundation of all religion, even religious men are accustomed to revile with every opprobrious epithet.

It is a law without which the animal system, which the Creator has determined shall form an integrant part of the universe, could not exist. It is a law so imperatively stringent that disobedience to it—if disobedience be possible—for, in the case of self-destruction, it may well be doubted whether the suicide do not consult this law by that very act—is thought to be sufficient evidence of insanity. It is a law, any neglect or attempted infringement of which, invariably carries with it its own punishment. Yet, while all men obey it, all men revile it. But, as I have observed before, this very reviling is itself but one of the ten thousand manifestations of the same law.

### B.

But though self-love be productive of much good, and is undoubtedly, to a certain extent, necessary, yet when carried to excess, is it not the parent of much evil?

### A.

*To a certain extent!* And pray who is to judge of the *proper extent*? Are the operations of the laws of nature to be regulated and modified at the caprice of human opinion? This is to repeat the ancient farce of Canute, who, as he stood upon the sands, said to the sea, “thus far shalt thou come, and no farther.” But did the sea hear him? Or, if it heard him, did it mind him? If the extent of the operation of this law were left to be regulated by human opinion, the result would be the same as though the quantity and frequency of the rain were left to be regulated by the opinions of men. Scarcely two would be found to agree as to the when and the where and the proper amount. And it is because men have weakly imagined that the operation of this law is to be regulated by them, that so much quarrelling, and confusion, and mischief *have* ensued.

I read the law of self-love, written in unmistakeable characters in the book of nature. But, attached to it, I can discover no conditions of any kind. And the evils you speak of do not result from this law—but from the collision of this law with the conventional laws and opinions of men—and the vain opposition with which these latter attempt to withstand its operation. They are the hybrid result of an unnatural encounter.

B.

Do you mean to say, then, that it is a duty which every man owes to himself to seek his own happiness even at the expense of another?

A.

Your question, and the air of surprise with which you put it, are both natural enough. They only show, however, that you have not paid much attention to the manner in which the *individual* law in question operates upon *the whole*. To your question I answer, yes. But although every man owes it to himself to seek his own happiness, even at the expense of another, yet that other is equally impelled by his *own* self-love to resist him. And thus, from two opposing forces, the MEAN DIRECTION REQUIRED is obtained—as the mean direction of the earth round the sun is the result of the two opposing forces, called the centripetal and projectile.

This kind of *counterbalance* is observable everywhere. There is in nature a compensating principle—a self-adjusting power—which pervades all her works—and which enables her, in the midst of antagonizing causes, constantly to preserve her status quo. The distance of the planets from the sun is constantly increasing and decreasing. But, notwithstanding these oscillations, Laplace and Lagrange have demonstrated that the *mean distance* of each is *absolutely invariable*. These oscillations and perturbations are incessant throughout all her works—but the same *mean condition* is invariably restored—and the great end obtained. We may oppose and disturb the direction of her laws—we may turn her aside from the direct path for a time—but she will surely arrive at her journey's end, in spite of all we can do—and we shall as surely gain nothing but suffering as the fruits of so foolish a contest.

B.

But if every one is to seek his own happiness, even at the expense of others, it seems to me that the weak must necessarily and invariably become the slaves of the strong, or else that life must be consumed by the perpetual struggle between aggression and resistance. Is this right or just?

A.

*And such is the fact.* The weak *are*, always and everywhere, the slaves of the strong. And it is right that it should be so—for it is so *ordered*. And it is *just*, for it is so *commanded*. And I know that it is *so ordered and so commanded* for precisely the same reason that I know it is *ordered and commanded* that stones shall fall to the ground, viz. because human observation perceives that everywhere *such is the fact*. I *gather or get* that piece of knowledge as I *gather or get* every other knowledge—that is, through my senses. And it is a law of nature, for it is so *laid down*—by nature everywhere. And the weak OWE IT to their self-love—that is, they OUGHT to obey this law. Why? First, because any attempt to disobey it is instantly punished—by the strong. Secondly, because, resist it as they may, they must eventually yield, and nothing is gained, but suffering or destruction, by resistance. The very end and immediate object of self-love is self-preservation. But *all* punishment has a *tendency* to destroy the sufferer. He, therefore, who, in defence of his self-love subjects himself to destruction, defeats the very object of that law in defence of which he suffers. Thus my self-love would induce me to resist the amputation of a limb. But if, by resisting amputation, I know that I must lose my life, then the same law which at one time induces me to resist, at another, induces me to yield. So self-love would induce the weak to resist the strong—but knowing they would suffer more by resisting than by yielding, the same self-love induces them to yield. And thus, under all circumstances, the law of self-love conduces to the law of self-preservation.

I have said that the weak are everywhere the slaves of the strong. And—

B.

You, of course, are now alluding to a state of nature. In



civilized communities, in England for instance, this cannot be true.

A.

Nonsense—it is true everywhere—otherwise it could not be a law of nature. *Might* constitutes the *right* in England, as well as anywhere else. For what are our laws, and all human laws, and indeed all natural laws, but the exercise of superior strength? for the purpose of *compelling* the object of those laws (no matter, whether animate or inanimate—for the rule is *universal*) to a particular line of conduct. And with regard to all human laws, this line of conduct is chalked out by the strong many, without any other rule than their own pleasure. And they say to the weak few: “thus and thus shall you do, and not otherwise. You shall no longer live according to the dictates of your own self-love, but according to the dictates of *ours*. It pleases *us* to live a life of ease and physical comfort. And if you, in pursuit of your happiness of a different kind, disturb us with your brawls, or noisy and turbulent rejoicings, we will punish you.” Why? They can give but one answer—“because we are the stronger.” If the turbulent formed the numerous and stronger party, then the laws would be laid down by them, and the self-love of the weak and peaceable few would be sacrificed to the self-love of the strong and turbulent many.

It must be remembered that the law of self-love is not one unique whole. Every man has a separate law more or less peculiar to himself, which peculiarity constitutes *individual characters and tastes*. As the organization of the human countenance is almost infinitely varied, so also is his internal organization—and consequently human characters and human tastes are also infinitely various—and so, therefore, must be the means by which they seek to gratify these tastes. No man, therefore, is competent to prescribe the means of happiness to another, because he cannot know wherein the happiness of that other consists. He can only know wherein his own consist. And it is as absurd for the peaceable many to tell the turbulent few, or for the civilized to say to the barbarian: “you would be much happier, if you would lead the life which we lead,” as it would be for a man to tell another that his (the other’s) wife

would be much handsomer if she were dark instead of fair. In both instances we make our own tastes the guage and standard by which we arbitrarily seek to measure the tastes of others.

Our own laws, and the laws of all civilized states, are nothing but an agreement entered into by the **STRONG** and peaceable *many*, to hold in subjection the **WEAK** and disorderly few—weak, because they *are* few? I say the weak are everywhere subject to the strong, and ruled and coerced by them. And why do you start with surprise when I say “*it is right*” that it should be so”? I will tell you. It is because you suffer yourself to be influenced by *words*, without attending to their *real import*—like a child by a ghost story. For I have only to dress the same proposition in other words, and you will immediately assent to it, as to a proposition which is undeniable. For is it not *right that the interests of the few should yield to those of the many?* The two propositions are identical, for the *many* and the *strong* are *one and the same*—and the *few* and the *weak* are *one and the same*. They are but different terms applied to the same thing.

B.

Yes—but the interests of the few are not sacrificed because they are *too weak* to defend them—but simply because they are *few*.

A.

Indeed! well—what *reason* have you for this assertion? What cause or shadow of a cause is there why it should be so? Why should the few, each individual of whom is influenced by a self-love as strong as that which influences each individual of the many—why, I say, should the few sacrifice *their* self-love to the self-love of the *others*? You have not the shadow of an intelligible reason to offer. You would attribute it to a sense of abstract justice—to some unknown and undiscoverable something—some shadowy principle—which no one can define, and about which no two men can agree—and which can nowhere be found in operation in any of the dominions of nature. Where is this abstract justice? What is it? What do the words mean?—what is it *apart from all words*?—exhibit it to my

senses—enable me to know it, or gather it, or become acquainted with it, in some way or other, I care not how—so that you do but put into me the *meaning* which the words *mean*, *apart* from the *words themselves*.

The doctrine of innate principles, you know, has been given up on all hands ever since Locke exposed its absurdity. I have shown you the utter impossibility of obtaining any ideas from reflection. So that unless you can make me either see, or feel, or taste, or smell, or hear this same abstract justice, I am wholly at a loss to guess how I am to make myself acquainted with it.

The moment you mention the words “*abstract justice*,” you instantly become involved in a maze of metaphysical mysticism. But the moment you consent to interpret language according to the realities of nature, and consent to believe, with Horne Tooke, that the language of men is but the translation of the language of things—a consequence necessarily flowing from Horne Tooke’s system of language—of which Lord Brougham has declared that it is so “*eminently natural and reasonable*” that “*all men are convinced of its truth*”—the moment, in fact, that you substitute *reason* in the place of fanciful prejudices, all mysticism ceases, and everything becomes plain and intelligible as that two and two make four.

Now—now that I will suppose you have consented to become the disciple of common sense, if any ask you, why the interests of the few should be sacrificed to those of the many, tell them it is because the few *cannot help themselves*—but are coerced by the many, in obedience to that universal law which has *laid it down*, that the weak shall be held in subjection by the strong.

If there were but two men—a strong and a weak one—in their war against the rest of creation, for food and self-protection, they would unite, because their interests would be the same. But should any difference of opinion and consequent dispute arise between them concerning their *individual interests*, then the weaker must necessarily yield to the stronger. The sincere conviction of a man, however false, yet stands to him in the light of truth. And for the strong man to yield up what he *believed*, to be *truly* his *right*, to what he *must* therefore believe to be the *false* claim of the weak man, would be for truth and



strength voluntarily to give way before weakness and falsehood. Thus the weak man would lie constantly at the mercy of the strong man's *opinion*. They could not even take your abstract justice for an umpire between them. Because even the question: "what is the abstract justice of any one particular case," must always be answered according to the *opinion* of the strong man—which he, believing it to be the true one, would defend.

Now here is no *numerical* difference—and you cannot say that the interests of the few must yield to the interests of the many—because they *are* many. Neither can you decide their disputes by a reference to abstract justice. Yet here you observe the same thing happening which happens everywhere else between the many and the few—viz. that the weak are subject to the strong—and this case proves that the reason of this is, not because the many *are many*, but solely because they are the stronger. These two supposed individuals represent every community—the weak man represents the few, and the strong one the many—and they are both governed by the same natural laws.

If the few resigned their own interests to those of the many, upon any other principle than that of compulsion, we should see this principle *in operation*. But do we see it? Do we see the few voluntarily resigning their rights and interests to those of the many?—*excepting where resistance is clearly useless, and where, therefore, it is more to their interest to yield than to resist?* You say, upon my principle of might, the lives of the weak would be frittered away in the struggles of resistance. And is not this the case? I refer you to our daily police reports for an answer. There is in ours, and every other civilized community, a few who find more pleasure in living a life of disorder, than in leading one which is in accordance with the laws and usages of society. And how are their lives—the lives of these *weak few*—passed? Is it not in a perpetual struggle with the superior force of the laws and usages of the many? Why should not these *few* live in accordance with the dictates of their own self-love, as well as the *many*? The self-love of the few is as strong *in the few*, as it is in the many! You can give me no reasons why they should not—excepting such only as consist merely of opinion. But you know, we are here concerned with moral

mathematics—and mathematics is a science into which mere opinion can by no possibility be allowed to enter, and which will be satisfied with nothing short of demonstrations exhibited to the senses, or based upon those *observed phenomena* called laws of nature, or self-evident truths.

You say, the interests of the few—say, for example, of one man—should be sacrificed to those of the many. But how many? How will you determine the exact number to which it is right that one man should sacrifice his own interests? Say, one thousand. Then it is equally right that he should sacrifice his interests to nine hundred and ninety-nine, or else you are bound to show in what manner the reasons which make it right in the one instance, make it wrong in the other. And so I may go on subtracting one at a time from the original thousand until I reduce the number to a unit, and still you shall be unable to render a reason why it is right that one man's interest should be sacrificed to that of any one *specified number*, while it is *wrong* that it should be sacrificed to that of a number which is one less.

The amount of the many, therefore, to which it is right that the few should sacrifice their interests must be matter of opinion, and the self-love of the few will sway their opinion in one direction, while the self-love of the many will sway theirs in the contrary direction. The one will have a *natural tendency* to fix the amount too low, while the other will have a natural tendency to fix it too high—and you have no standard by which to decide between them. Ten men would say, “we are ten in number—therefore you should sacrifice your single interest to ours.” But the other would reply, “no—if you were *twenty* in number, I would consent perhaps.”

To these and fifty other questions, which it is impossible to answer otherwise than by reference to opinion, you subject yourself, so long as you continue to build your reasoning upon any other foundation than the *observed phenomena* of nature.

B.

Is it right for a thief to pick your pocket if he can?

A.

*If he can*—certainly. But it is also right for me, *if I can*, to detect and punish him. We both obey the *orders* of our own

self-love. To say he has a right to do it, is merely to say that he is *ordered* to do it—that is, tempted by his self-love or cupidity.

The public opinion concerning *thieving* is irrational and absurd. Had Napoleon conquered England, he would but have been thought the greater hero. But the eye of reason sees no difference between stealing a kingdom, and stealing a pocket-handkerchief. It is the same with murder. We read in history that twenty thousand men *fell* in a *brilliant action* between general A and field-marshal B—that a hundred men were killed on board his Majesty's ship so-and-so, in a *brilliant affair* which the admiral had with the French ship so-and-so, from which such-and-such an amount of prize-money would be derived. We are not shocked! We are only excited to admiration! But if a highwayman stop you on the road, compel you to fight with him, overcome and kill you, and abstract your purse, we are horrified both at the murder and the theft.

We do not call the First William, William “the *Thief*,” but William “the *Conqueror*.” Yet he *stole* the kingdom of England.

There is no such thing as abstract justice—nor abstract nor innate principle of any kind—nor is there any law which *orders* a man to sacrifice his own interest to that of another, or of a million of others. Nor can you show me any right or reason why the interests of the few should yield to those of the many, excepting only the single one of compulsion. For the law of self-love, in a single individual, operates as powerfully in one direction as the same law, in a million, operates in the opposite direction. And it is monstrous to suppose that, when two laws are operating, with equal forces, in opposite directions, one can yield to the other. For the self-loves (so to speak) of a million of men are not concentrated and applied to move *one* object, like a million of horses yoked to one wagon. But they are a million of different forces applied to move a million of different objects, viz. men. The intensity of the moving power, therefore, which moves a million of men is no greater than that which moves a single man. If you yoke one horse to one cart which you find he is unable to move, what will you gain by yoking a million of other horses to a million of other carts?

I suppose you will allow that every possible species of self-



interest must resolve itself finally into the gratification of self-love.

B.

Of course. It cannot be denied, I think.

A.

Suppose Mr. A come to me and request me to sell him my house, at a fair valuation, that he may pull it down, in order that his self-love may be gratified by improving the prospect from his drawing-room windows. Am I bound to comply?

B.

Certainly not.

A.

But suppose, the next day, Mr. B come to me with the same request, in order to the improvement of the prospect from his *dining-room* windows. Is Mr. A's first claim *in any manner* strengthened by this second claim of Mr. B?

B.

Certainly not.

A.

Then if Mr. A's claim be, *in no degree*, strengthened by the subsequent claim of *one other man*, it is *mathematically certain* that neither could it be in any degree strengthened by the claims of a million of other men. For *nothing*, multiplied by a million, is *nothing* still.

Suppose the captain of a vessel with a crew of a dozen sailors, having on board a cargo of a thousand living sheep, are caught in a storm which makes it necessary to lighten the vessel. The sailors would throw the sheep overboard. What right have they to do so? No man can show me the shadow of a right—excepting only the right of might.

Now here is an instance in which the interests of the many are sacrificed to the interests of a few. Why? Because, in this instance, the *few* are stronger than the *many*. Convert the sheep into African slaves, and precisely the same thing would happen for precisely the same reason.

In the case of the slaves the right may possibly be disputed. In the case of the sheep, if sheep could talk, it would be disputed also.

But the truth of this doctrine is so broadly manifest, on the slightest unprejudiced reflection, that it cannot need further amplification.

The law is universal. It holds even in the inorganic and vegetable kingdoms. If a large stone fall upon a smaller one, of the same kind, it will crush it. And if you plant a rose bush at the foot of a young oak, the oak will appropriate to itself so much of the nutriment of the soil, that the rose will be left to starve, wither, and die. An example of the fact, on a large scale, that the strong everywhere tyrannize over the weak, is at the present moment exhibited over more than half the entire earth. For the process of civilization—what is it but the tyranny of the strong over the weak?—the tyranny of knowledge over ignorance?—the tyranny of superior organization over one which is inferior? It is impossible to cultivate the inferior tribes of men to any important extent. The organization of their brains and skulls will not permit it\*—and civilization, with regard to these, is but another term for extermination. Look at North America—what has become of her people? And what has become of her soil? The blood of her children have fattened it, and the shedders of that blood possess it.

In another century the New Zealander will have shared the fate of the Red Indian. And it is impossible not to foresee that the time is rapidly approaching when all the inferior human tribes shall be extinct, and their heritage, the earth, in undisputed possession of their civilizers—that is to say, their conquerors and exterminators.

#### B.

If there be no such thing as disinterestedness, how do you account for certain historical facts—as, for instance, the voluntary death of Marcus Curtius—and many other similar instances, all of which I will hold to be accounted for, if you can account for that one?

#### A.

I have already alluded to the perturbations or oscillations round an *invariable mean condition* indicating *disturbance* in the laws which regulate the planetary motions.

\* See Lawrence's Lectures on Man.

The laws which regulate the living actions constituting animal life are subject to similar disturbances. Thus, independently of the agency of any recognizable disease, we see men living in health up to the age of ninety years, while others die in health at the age of sixty or seventy. Yet the *mean duration* of human life, even now that it is subjected to so many additional disturbing causes—accidents arising out of a highly cultivated condition of society, and a multitudinous host of diseases—can nevertheless be calculated almost to a mathematical nicety. It is upon this self-compensating principle—this self-adjusting power—that the societies for the assurance of human life are erected, and which enables them to make their calculations with perfect security both to themselves and the assured.

The law of self-love is subject, in like manner, to similar disturbances. It oscillates, as it were, to the right and to the left of a *mean line of direction*—which *mean line* points directly to the self-preservation of the species—and finally accomplishes this great general object in spite of all disturbing causes.

Codrus and Marcus Curtius, who sacrificed themselves for the supposed advantage of their country, are examples of men obeying a *disturbed* law—of men seeking the general good, not in the direction pointed out by nature, but in a direction of their own choosing. Nature has determined that the *general* welfare shall be secured by a law which secures the welfare of *each individual*—the law of individual self-love. The self-love of Marcus Curtius was a *disturbed* law, which impelled him to seek the general good in a *different direction* from that provided by nature, viz. by *destroying* himself, instead of *protecting* himself. The *good of the whole* is the *ultimate*, not the immediate, end of individual self-love. Its *immediate end* is manifestly individual *self-preservation*. This being so, that law which defeats its object, and achieves one which is diametrically opposite to the object proposed by the institution of the law, must necessarily be a *disturbed law*. The immediate end proposed by the institution of the law of self-love in Marcus Curtius was to *preserve* Marcus Curtius. But the end *achieved* was his *destruction*.

Nature cannot be supposed to institute laws with a view to defeat their own objects.



But was the act of Marcus Curtius instigated by self-love at all? Unquestionably. He was a martyr—a martyr to patriotism—and all martyrs, whether to pride, to ambition, to military glory, to love, to philanthropy, or to religion, are instigated by self-love. They are all flying from punishment, or running full tilt in pursuit of happiness, in one shape or other, either here or hereafter. If you require authority for this—if your own reason and observation be not sufficient—then I refer you to themselves. They are *themselves* my authority. What are the motives which they allege for their conduct? Is it not REWARD in some shape or other? immortal honor? immortal glory? immortal happiness? And does not the philanthropist speak of the “*delicious satisfaction* which he feels in doing good?” Plenty of game in the hunting-fields of the good spirit is the *reward* to which the wild Indian looks, and in expectation of which he is ready, at any moment, to become a martyr. Plenty of strong ale or mead, quaffed in the halls of Valhalla, from the skulls of their enemies, was the reward for which our northern ancestors welcomed martyrdom with savage joy. A paradise filled with troops of houris is the reward of Mahometan martyrdom. The martyrs to the Catholic religion, both reformed and unreformed, *exulted* in their sufferings. Why? They themselves have told us: “Because of the *crown of glory* which awaits those who suffer for conscience sake, and because of their *reward* which is in heaven.” Self-love frequently manifests itself in the form of the dread of punishment alone. Thus hundreds of thousands yearly become martyrs, to a greater or less extent, from a dread of disgracing themselves in the eye of public opinion.

All these instances are but so many examples of martyrdom to the *disturbed* law of self-love. And Marcus Curtius undoubtedly looked forward to his reward also—either in the shape of immortal posthumous renown, or immortal posthumous felicity.

In a word, there is but one kind of martyr—the martyr to the disturbed law of self-love. I say *disturbed* law—for that must be a disturbed law which defeats its own object. And that it is a *disturbed* law is further proved by the punishment which nature instantly inflicts upon the *disturber*, to a greater or

less extent, according to the greater or less amount of the disturbance.

In cultivated communities the law of self-love—the autophilic law—is, almost universally, a *disturbed law*, and the *few* who dare to obey the genuine *undisturbed law* are branded by the many with opprobrious epithets—mean, base, selfish.

I cannot pursue this argument into all its minutiae of proofs and examples. I must leave something to be done by yourself. From the first I have only pretended to offer you “food for thought,” and to point out to you that altar whereat, and that temple wherein, every lover of philosophy must pray, if the object of his prayer be true knowledge—I mean the altar of speech, and that temple whose roof is the heavens, and whose floor is the magnificent mosaic of the earth’s surface.

One very frequent cause of *disturbance* in the autophilic law—the law of self-love—is WEALTH.

The immediate and DIRECT object of self-love is to furnish the individual with the *necessaries* of life. But when a man has *secured* to himself these necessities for the *whole term* of his life, the immediate and direct object of the autophilic law is removed. But the law is not therefore abolished. A law of nature cannot be annihilated at the caprice of man, nor by any human exertion or ingenuity. What is the consequence? Why, that its energies are directed towards other objects. And here commence the whims, and caprices, and madness of men. And herein is to be found the solution of the enigma of human folly. Now it is that men become patriots, and philanthropists—and political orators, and build hospitals, and found universities. These men are but obeying a *disturbed self-love*—a self-love which, having lost its prime and legitimate object, is seeking a new one.

Herein too must be sought the only true and unquestionable definition of insanity. A perfectly sane, i. e. sound man is he in whom all the laws of his life and nature are so fulfilled as to *accomplish completely* all the *objects of their institution*—of which the first is self-preservation. If this be so—and surely it cannot be denied—then it follows that he is insane, i. e. unsound, in whom the laws of his nature act in a direction which *defeats the object* for which they were established. Every man, there-

fore, is more or less *insane* whose actions have a necessary tendency to his own destruction—and that *condition* of society which compels men to “kill themselves in order to live”—to shorten their lives by overtasked exertion—is an *insane condition*. This is what I meant when I said some time since that *we are all*, more or less, mad—for we are all, with few exceptions, overtasking our strength, and shortening our lives, or at least enfeebling our health and strength, and thus *endangering* our lives either in order to procure the mere necessities of life, or to conciliate the favor of that most ruthless of all oppressors, public opinion.

A young man goes into business, the legitimate object of which is to procure the means of living for himself and dependents. But this does not satisfy public opinion, which urges him to do more than this—to elevate himself in the scale of society—to make a *respectable appearance*—and, if possible, to make such provision for his family after his death, as shall enable them to live in comfort without labour. In attempting to obey this tyrannical mandate, he overtasks his strength, ruins his health, and *shortens his life*—and if he do this, he is as undeniably a suicide as he who cuts his own throat—and is, therefore, to that extent, insane. The mere *means* by which a man deprives himself of life can make no difference to the eye of reason, in the character of the act of killing. But it makes all the difference in the eye of public opinion, which *halloo!* *him on* to destroy himself—to crack the very sinews of his health—in straining after that phantom, a “respectable appearance,” and in attempting to raise himself and family in the scale of society; while, if he resort to the more simple process of a garter and a bed-post, it brands him for a self-murderer, drives a stake through his body, and buries him with ignominy in the four-cross-ways.

Neither can the amount of that portion of life of which a man deprives himself, make any difference to the character of the act. For a man who cuts his throat at seventy, is as certainly a suicide as he who does it at twenty.

He, therefore, who, whether at the instigation of public opinion, the tone of public feeling, the mode of public thinking, public morals or public politics, or excited by actual disease of



his own brain, chases an object, the pursuit of which, *be it what it may*, injures his health or shortens his life, though it be but to the amount of a dozen years, is both a suicide and a madman—or a victim to the moral oppression—the strong coercion—exercised by the strength of the many over the weakness of the few. Most men start in life with the hope to make a fortune, and are applauded by public opinion for the attempt. If it be right to make the attempt, it must also be right to succeed. And if it be right for one man to succeed, success must be equally commendable in all. Yet if all *did* succeed, universal poverty and utter and general disorganization must be the inevitable result—and the Duke of Wellington must not only dig his own potatoes, but wash and cook them too. For if all men were rich, where would they find servants?

Here then, public opinion lauds to the skies an *attempt* involving in itself the *certain destruction*, to a greater or less amount, of the health—and the *very success* of which, not only defeats the *object* of the attempt, but necessarily results in the total disorganization of society. Yet the attempt *must* be made. For him who neglects to do so, public opinion will brand with odium and disgrace.

Surely a condition of men involving such gross anomalies, impossibilities, and absurd self-contradictions, cannot be other than insane, i. e. unsound.

Let me give you an instance of another anomaly.

Suppose a man of but little physical power, and of small stature, goes into business as a general shopkeeper, in a country town, the inhabitants of which are only enow to support one shop of the kind. Now suppose a stronger man then he comes into his house, takes him by the collar, expels him and his family from the town, packs up his wares for him, sends them after him, and sets up business himself in the room of the other. Is the strong man justified—has he a right to do this?

B.

Of course not—and any laws which would suffer it would be most unjust, oppressive, and unnatural.

A.

Very well. Now suppose the case of another man who also

goes into business in a country town—a man somewhat dull witted, and with but little mental energy, and naturally deficient in tact and shrewdness—but who, nevertheless, is able to scrape together a tolerable livelihood for himself and family, *because there is no other of the same trade in the town*. Now again, suppose a sharp-witted, hawk-eyed, active, intelligent fellow, on the look-out for a favourable spot wherein to commence business, taking advantage of the natural dulness and want of talent in the other, sets himself down in the same town, in the same business—and by his superior abilities in selecting and purchasing goods (which would enable him to sell them at a cheaper rate than the other) and by his superior tact in pleasing customers, attracts all the trade to his own shop, and ruins the other. Has he a right to do this? Oh! yes, say you—certainly. But why? Why has a man *no right* to injure another by means of that part of his body, consisting of muscle and bone, and called *an arm*, while he *has a right* to injure him by that other part of his body, consisting of a pulpy matter, and called a brain? It would be as reasonable to say that one man may injure another with his right hand, but not with his left. Or that you may knock me down with a stick, but not with a stone! In both instances the result is the same—viz. the ruin of another. And the means adopted are *also the same*—viz. the superior organization or strength of some part of the body.

And even if you still persist in calling the mind a separate existence, it makes no difference. For superior strength is still superior strength, whether of mind or body.

Yet, while physical oppression is forbidden, intellectual oppression is allowed. But oppression and its effects are the same, in either case, and the laws which allow either are, to use your own words, “most unjust, oppressive, and unnatural.”

Nature has laid down the law that the weak shall be subject to the strong. Man has laid down a law that the weak *shall not* be subject to the strong. The human law, as we have just seen, fails to achieve its object. For what nature is not allowed to achieve by *physical* superiority, she achieves by mental superiority—and thus compensates for the disturbance in her original law. The natural law is accomplished. All that the

human law has done is to *disturb* the natural law—merely substituting strength of brain for strength of limb. The natural law is *disturbed*, not *abolished*—and *compensation* is made for the *disturbance*—the machinery of the natural law *adjusts itself*—and the *same end* is obtained by merely a *variation of the means*. The line of direction oscillates and becomes crooked—but its extreme points are one and co-equal with the extreme points of the undisturbed straight line.

What is the abstract justice of the latter case here supposed? You cannot tell. Why? Because there is no such thing as abstract justice. Wherein consists the *right* of the talented man, by his talents, to ruin his neighbour? Both the *right and the justice* consist in the *order and command* promulgated in that law of nature which declares that the weak shall everywhere be subject to the strong.

In every highly cultivated community *all* the natural laws are *disturbed*. Artificial diet, artificial habits, artificial excitement—the custom of seeking a livelihood by the sweat of the brain instead of the sweat of the brow—the first effect of all these is to disturb the fundamental laws of health and life itself—viz. absorption, secretion, circulation, and respiration. From this disturbance in these fundamental laws result disease, premature death of individuals, and an offspring and a population sickly in health and puny in strength. Hence that almost countless host of diseases to which polished societies are subject. Talk of the plague! The victims to the plague, in this kingdom, in any one century, are as nothing compared with the numbers who perish, in the same period, of scrofulous disorders, especially that called consumption, which in nine cases out of ten are the result of a puny and depreciated condition of the health of the parents, from the causes just mentioned.

From a depreciated condition of the health and strength results a morbid sensibility which causes men to be impressed *strongly* by things which, in a natural and healthy state, could only affect them *feebly*. The laws of human life being disturbed, while the rest of creation remains in its natural condition, the original relation established between man and the things and circumstances wherewith he is surrounded, is necessarily de-



stroyed. Thus instead of being a creature of reason, he becomes only a creature of morbid feeling. And his conduct, instead of being influenced by *healthy* impressions made upon *sound* organs and *healthy* senses, is governed by those *unhealthy* impressions made upon *unsound* organs and *unhealthy* senses, called impulses—impulses of feeling—the capricious impulses of a morbid sensibility—capricious, because varying according to the greater or less amount of the morbidity of the system which they move and direct. From this morbid sensibility—this disturbance in the natural relation between men and things arise the caprices and eccentricities of men, in all their various shades and colors—hence madness—hence suicide.

And although, perhaps, *slight traces* of these may be found even in the natural condition of man, yet as he advances towards cultivation, they increase with so much rapidity as to give them a just claim to be called the sole offspring of a refined condition of society.

Hence, too, results that perversion of the natural relation between cause and effect, making the lesser cause produce the stronger impression, and the greater cause the weaker impression, as exemplified in the fact that, while the account of a dozen victims tomahawked to death and afterwards scalped by a party of Red Indians, thrills us with horror, the account of such a battle as that of Waterloo makes us shout with triumphant joy.

In the eye of a healthy reason,\* wherein does this triumphant shout of joy raised by polished Englishmen differ from the barbarous yell raised by the victorious savage on a similar occasion, viz. the death of his enemy? Why do we call the one a "savage yell marking the barbarian's delight in blood and slaughter," while we delicately term the other merely the "shout of victory?" The savage no more delights in blood than we do. He merely delights in victory over his enemies. Do not we the same? If not, whence the shoutings, and rejoicings, and illuminations after the battle of Waterloo? The rejoicings of a civilized nation after a victory are a thousand times greater, more noisy, and more prolonged than those of any savages under

\* That is, to a man whose senses are (not morbidly, but) healthily impressed with the things around him.

the sun. How we laugh at the savage for painting his body when he goes on the war path! "Poor, ignorant, benighted, blinded creature!" cry we. And then, with the exclamation on our lips, gravely proceed to do the very same thing.

B.

The same thing! Do our warriors paint their bodies, then, when they go into battle?

A.

Do they not? The "poor, benighted savage" covers his body with *red paint*, or paint of some other color—the enlightened, intellectual, British soldier covers his with *scarlet cloth*. We practice the one, and ridicule the other. What a wise and enlightened distinction!—a distinction without a difference. Whatever good results to the soldier from the *color* of his cloth, results to the savage from the *color* of his paint.

I lately read an account of a Pawnee dandy at his toilette, and laughed to observe the absolute no-difference between the savage, and the civilized, puppy.

In France alone, the suicides, in 1836, amounted to 2,310—in 1837, to 2,413—in 1838, to 2,556—in 1839, to 2,717—showing not only an increase since 1836, but an *increasing increase*.

TEN THOUSAND SELF-MURDERERS in one civilized kingdom in the short space of four years!! What an argument for the blessings of civilization!! To these must be added the tens of thousands who lose their lives from *accidents* in some way or other connected with the pursuits of civilized men—and the many thousands who perish prematurely from diseases *exclusively peculiar* to civilization—and the many thousands more who howl away their lives within the walls of madhouses. What a temptation to the New Zealanders to become polished partakers of these privileges.

The cry of the age is for *facts*—"give us *facts*!" What fact in the world is more unmistakeably manifest than that disease and premature death, madness, suicide, and blood-guiltiness, dog the heels of men, multiplying at every step, throughout their entire progress from the simple habits of nature towards those of art and cultivation, which is boastingly

termed the "march of intellect?" What axiom in Euclid is more self-evidently true, than that while barbarism slays her thousands, cultivation and refinement destroy their tens of millions?

B.

I am afraid I must have misunderstood you. For you cannot mean to say that a person ought, or it is right for him, to rob or oppress, or murder another, merely because he can do so with impunity. Would you tell your child it was right for him to deceive, or rob, or vilify you, if he could do so undetected? This does not appear to me to be morality, but brutality!

A.

I am not at all surprised at your question, although it is no more consequent upon anything I have said than the question of the sun's diameter. It only proves (what to me required no proof) the ineradicable perversity with which men will persist in using words, like parrots, without attaching to them any definite meaning. For ten months I have been labouring to show you the necessity of using all important words in an argument in a *clear, uniform, and definite* sense. And you have both listened with attention, and acknowledged this necessity—yet you go on, still as ever, hit or miss, in the same random, indefinite, unmeaning use of words as before. I set out at the commencement of the moral mathematics by defining the word *right* to signify *that which is ordered*—and the words *ought* and *duty* to mean *that which a man owes*. But what care you for definitions? Your mathematics, having nothing to do with *truth*, can do without *definitions* either. What a curious perversion of the truth, too, is contained in the last sentence of what you have just uttered. You say, to murder, rob, deceive, or vilify one's parents, is not morality, but brutality? Is it so? Morality signifies the manners and habits of men—brutality, the manners and habits of brutes. Is it in accordance with the manners and habits of brutes to oppress and murder, unless it be for food, or when they are at war with each other? Is it their custom to rob, deceive, or vilify their parents? Cheating, and lying, and robbing, and murdering for money, or for ambition, or for what are termed honour and glory, form no part of the manners of



the uneducated brutes!—these are *human*, not *brutal*, customs! and you yourself, not a moment since, were guilty of nearly the whole of them—for you **VILIFIED** the brutes when you assigned to them, by the term brutality, manners and customs which are peculiar to men, and of which the uneducated brutes are entirely innocent. And it is **NOT TRUE** that their vices constitute brutality, i. e. the manners and habits of brutes. And it is **NOT HONEST** to attribute to one party vices which belong exclusively to the other. How then can you call it brutality to rob, cheat, and murder one's parents merely because it can be done with impunity? There is but one reason—the habit of using words either without definite meanings or with no meaning at all.

Two young men had refused to dine with Rowland Hill, because, they said, he would not drink with them. “If you will but come,” said Mr. Hill, “I will not only drink with you, but get as drunk as a beast.” They went—and Mr. Hill kept his word—he *did* get as drunk as a beast—that is to say, not drunk at all—for beasts never get drunk.

“As drunk as a lord” is much the better phrase.

You will observe that it is only for *uneducated* brutes that I have claimed exemption from vices. For it is with brutes as with men. Educate them—domesticate them—civilize them—for the words are of the same import—and vice and disease, ever the natural spawn of education, are instantly seen crawling around them. And the domestic rabbit and sow begin to devour their own young—and the stabled horse to become lame, blind, vicious and diseased.

I do not use the word education to signify the mere learning of the A, B, C—but to denote generally that deviation from a natural condition called the march of intellect, elevation of the human mind, improved condition of society, and other such unmeaning terms.

Knowledge is power. Most true—but is it happiness? The one has been proved and acknowledged—the other, taken for granted without proof, without consideration, and without question.

You have repeatedly accused me of reiterating the same thing too often. I have already reiterated that the word right signifies

*that which is ordered.* Yet your question shows that you have already forgotten it—and you thus oblige me to reiterate it once again. By jumbling the two words “*right or ought*” together, as though they imported the same thing, you have made it impossible to answer your question *as one*, for it is not one, but *two questions*—and these, too, requiring exactly opposite answers. To your question, “is it *right* to commit these crimes?” I answer, “yes.” To your question, “*ought* a man to commit them,” I answer, “no.” If a man commit a crime, he has a *right* to do so—for men never act at all without a *right*, i. e. an *order* or motive, or a something which moves them, of some kind or other. But that *order* may be the *mere bidding of another man*—or, what is called temptation—or malice—or what not. If I order you to murder your child, and you do so accordingly, and I am asked whether you had a *right* to do so, I answer, “yes;” for that only means that you were *ordered* or *told* to do so. But whether you *ought* to do so—that is, whether it be your *duty* to do so—is quite a different matter. If a boy see the corner of a new silk handkerchief peeping out of my pocket, and steal it in consequence, he has a *right* to do so—for that only means that he is *ordered*, or moved, or tempted, to do so. If you order a new pair of shoes of your shoe-maker, he has a *right* to make them—that is, he has an *order* to do so. But whether he *ought* to make them is quite another question. And although he has the *right* or *order* to make them, the question whether he *ought* to make them—whether *he owes it to himself* to make them—whether it be a *duty* which he owes to his own interests to make them—will depend, I fancy, upon whether he believes you mean to pay for them.

It is this jumbling together of words, having different meanings, which forms the immedicable malady of moral reasoners.

The first great earthly duty of man is that which he owes to his own preservation. And the second (at least in the order of time) is that which he owes to his offspring. And these **ARE** his duties because they are—not merely *orders*—but *orders of nature*—orders or laws which the Creator has laid down for the achievement of his great purpose, the preservation of the whole.

And what more beautiful, simple, and infallible scheme could have been possibly devised for this end, than a law, irresistibly stringent, whose immediate effect is to compel every one to take care of *himself and offspring*. For if every individual obey this law, is not the well-being of the whole infallibly accomplished? A man *ought*, therefore—that is, he *owes it* to himself and offspring—that is, it is a duty which he owes to himself and offspring—a duty which he owes also to the accomplishment of the Creator's great purpose—to seek his own safety and welfare, and to shun danger. But to rob, murder, and oppress, would be to seek danger and to shun safety—it would be to invite retaliation, or court the vengeance of the law—and is, therefore, *contrary to the duty* which men owe to themselves and to the Creator's designs. But, say you, *ought* men to do these things provided they could do them with impunity? The question is idle, insignificant, and self-contradictory—and the case supposed impossible. For if one man *ought* to do these things, then all men *ought* to do so too—for human duties are universal and the same. Thus, if Mr. A ought to murder Mr. B, whenever he could do so with impunity, Mr. Somebody-else *ought* in his turn to murder Mr. A, upon the same principle. And this state of things would be one of constant universal danger, instead of universal security. A condition of impunity, therefore, is incompatible with this condition of things. And it is impossible, as I have just said, that this condition and a condition of impunity should exist together.

But if a man be reduced to inevitable starvation, after having made every possible honest effort to save himself, that man has a *right* to steal from his neighbour, and it is his *duty* to steal from his neighbour also; for here the *right*—that is, the *order*, is an *order of nature*—and *not* to steal becomes a crime—a breach of the duty which every man owes to himself, to his offspring, and, through them, to the accomplishment of the preservation of the whole. I have here (fortunately) a very high authority in my favor. It has been laid down by one (perhaps more) of our great judges, I am almost certain by judge Hale, but am not quite sure of the name, that if a man have made every possible effort, and is nevertheless in imminent danger of death from



starvation, that man is justified in going into a baker's shop and stealing bread—and that, if he could PROVE he had made every possible effort, the law would hold him guiltless.

The reason of this is very evident. For if a man suffer himself to die, having within his reach the means of living, he commits murder ; and refuses to perform his share towards the accomplishment of the great ultimate law of God, the preservation of the whole. God has said to every man : “you shall live and beget offspring, and so contribute your share towards the accomplishment of my design.” But he who commits murder rebels against this command—and, instead of contributing to the safety of the whole, he contributes to the *destruction* of the whole by destroying *one of its parts*. And it is no matter whether he kill himself or kill another—it is no matter whether Mr. A kill Mr. A or Mr. B—in either case a man is killed—and it is the destruction of a man which constitutes the offence—it is because it is a breach of the laws of God that it becomes an offence, and not because it is a breach of the laws of man. The crime of murder can neither be aggravated nor diminished by any question as to who was the murderer. Mr. A is murdered. Who murdered him ? Perhaps Mr. B. By and bye, however, it is discovered that he murdered himself. Very well—then Mr. B. is exonerated, and Mr. A is inculpated. But the offence is in no wise altered—God's law still remains as completely broken as before—the injury to the great whole remains the same—the *amount* of injury, and therefore the *intensity* of the offence, is neither lessened nor increased merely because you have discovered the true offender. Self-murder, therefore, is as great a crime as the murder of another.

The *intensity* of every crime must be measured by the amount of injury which it inflicts upon the whole—by the greater or less amount of its tendency to *destroy* the whole. Murder is an injury inflicted directly upon the living whole, for it consists of the absolute destruction of a *part* of the living whole. It has, therefore, a direct *tendency* to destroy the whole—while stealing a loaf of bread, although even this, by breeding quarrels, has also a similar tendency, yet this tendency is *not direct*, but *remote*.

These are the reasons why it is a man's duty, if he can by *no means* procure it otherwise, to steal bread rather than to starve. It is because stealing puts the great whole in less jeopardy than murder—in the latter case, the injury is instant and certain—in the former, only remote and probable.

If it were a law of nature—that is, a duty—that men should murder and injure each other merely because they could do so with impunity, (which I have already shown to be impossible) then we should discover this law in operation. But go in search of this law and tell me in which page of the book of nature it is written. You will nowhere find it so laid down. There are no beings, either brute or human, that delight in murder and oppression for no other reason than because they can do it with impunity. Neither man nor brute *ever does anything* without some motive. And whether that motive be a proper one or not belongs, as I have said, to another question.

The final object of all the laws of nature, as is proved by the fact that they all have that one tendency, is the preservation of the whole. But to have created animals with a natural propensity to destroy each other, for *no other reason* than for destruction's sake, would have been to institute a law, the direct tendency of which would have been to destroy the perfect integrity of the whole, by utterly annihilating that *part of the whole* which consists of living animals, or that race of living animals in which this propensity existed.

The great lawgiver has not legislated after this bungling fashion. It is human law alone which exhibits such blunders, as I hope to show presently.

## B.

The two great human duties, therefore, are self-preservation, and the preservation of offspring—and the two great human motives to fulfil these duties are self-love and love of offspring. And the final cause of all human duties is the preservation of the perfect integrity of the whole—and these duties are universal and immutable, and therein distinguished from religious rites or duties, which are subject to change, for they have changed, and which differ in different parts of the world.

A.

Yes—I am only concerned with laws and duties which are universal and immutable, and therefore have no concern with religious duties. But be pleased to remember that, although I have spoke of the “perfect integrity” of the whole as the grand object, I use the word “perfect” with reference to God’s design, and not with reference to the opinions of men or what they may please to look upon as perfection. I call that a *perfect* system which is as God designed it to be—which is the undisturbed unique result of those laws which God has laid down to govern its several parts. The very evils, therefore, as some men are pleased to call them—I mean those so-called evils which are manifestly inseparable from a system—do by no means detract from the perfection of that system—for its perfection consists in being exactly what God by his laws—for no one will deny the laws of nature to be the laws of God—*has ordered* it to be. I know very well that occasionally certain species both of animals and vegetables have disappeared, without the intervention of any human agency to disturb the laws of their existence—and a planet may now and then be disrupted, and its surface be repopled with new living things. But these are matters beyond the reach of human interference, and are therefore clearly a part of the general scheme. They are merely disturbances however—small oscillations—mere temporary deviations from the direct line of accomplishment. And we can by no means take these for an example, and make them an excuse for neglecting the duties and the laws which are manifestly laid down for our observance. We have, in fact, nothing whatever to do with them. We have nothing to do with any laws but those which relate to ourselves—and with these we have nothing to do also—except to obey them—without making insane attempts to alter, modify, or amend them.

B.

You have yet said nothing about man’s duty to his neighbour. Is it not my duty to succour my neighbour?

A.

The duty is unquestionable—and, if you will look abroad, you will see it, like every other duty, in universal operation—more



fully and constantly, however—that is, with fewer exceptions—and less disturbance to the law—in uncultivated, than in cultivated, communities. You will find the *exceptions and the disturbance* increase in proportion as society advances in cultivation and refinement. The reason is plain. For as society advances in cultivation, greater numbers of men become INDEPENDENT of their neighbours.

The duty, that I should succour my neighbour, is unquestionable. It is a duty which I owe. But to whom or to what do I owe it? To my neighbour? No—I owe it to myself—for the poet was right who declared that “self-love and social are the same.”

Man being a gregarious animal—a social, not a solitary being—is every instant more or less dependent on his neighbour to assist him in procuring food, and repelling danger. And the readiness of his neighbour to assist him will depend upon the readiness which he has himself shown aforetime to assist his neighbour. Men live ever surrounded by their fellow-men—in tribes, villages, towns, cities—and experience and observation teach them that they are also everywhere surrounded by danger—that these dangers are often of a nature which nothing can repel but the assistance of others—as, for instance, sickness, accidents, conflagrations, and overmastering enemies. Man is never a self-depending being. The experience and observation of every hour keep this fact perpetually before his eyes, and make him conscious of it unceasingly. The same observation and experience, either in his own person or that of others, are also perpetually exhibiting examples of the punishment which infallibly awaits him in some shape or other, who will do nothing to assist others. “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you,” is a perfectly wise maxim, therefore—obedience to which has a constant and direct tendency to the self-preservation of each individual. The truth of this maxim, and the necessity for obeying it, become so deeply graven on the hearts of all men, that it forms an ever ready motive prompting them to instant action on the most sudden emergencies. It is clearly founded, however, on self-love, and not on the love of one’s neighbour. The latter half of the sentence—“as you would have *others do*

*unto you*”—of itself would be sufficient to betray its origin. The various maxims, and sententious aphorisms, purporting the same thing are almost numberless. “Win golden opinions from all sorts of men,” is another of precisely the same nature. “Be kind, affable, and polite to all men, however poor and humble,” are words in the mouths of all. And they are generally followed up by some such *reason* as this: “for you don’t know how soon you may yourself require their assistance; and there are none so poor and humble who may not have power to injure or to succour you.” “Give alms to the poor.” Why? They who give the advice generally give the *reason* along with it—“for you don’t know how soon you may become poor yourself, and need the charity of others.” Yet these people who invariably accompany *this* advice with *this* reason, if you were to ask them whether their motive for bestowing alms be an interested and selfish one, would loudly declare that it is not so. How curious!

Please others, that others may please you. Serve others, that others may serve you. Use your neighbour as you desire your neighbour to use you. These are the principles which govern the conduct of all ranks and denominations of men—good, bad, and indifferent—in “court, camp, and grove”—in matters of business, matters of pleasure, matters of friendship, matters of love. The principle is as universal as the principle of self-love—for the two are one and the same. The objects which a man will *first* succour are himself and offspring.

The *second* are his own near relations. For these being those with whom he is accustomed to hold the most frequent communion, they are likewise those who would be generally nearest at hand, and therefore are those to whom he would be compelled to apply, should he himself require assistance. These are they, too, with whom the reciprocation of good offices has already begun in childhood. With these a debtor and creditor account has probably been already established.

The *third* are the members of his own sept, tribe, or clan—his own immediate neighbours, or townsmen, or shipmates, or shopmates, in preference to strangers—for the same reason.

*Fourthly*, his own countrymen in preference to foreigners—for the same reason.

*Fifthly*, his own species in preference to brute-animals—for the same reason.

Observation will prove that this is the *diminishing ratio of preference* which men exercise in the distribution of their acts of kindness and services. And you will observe that the *ratio of preference* diminishes exactly as the probability of repayment diminishes. It has been acutely observed by somebody, that the knowledge that a man's little finger was to be amputated in the morning, would be more likely to disturb the night's rest of that man, than his knowledge that the whole empire of China was to be destroyed by an earthquake.

As society advances, and men become wealthy, the conviction that they can always *BUY* the services of others, disturbs the natural operation of this part of the law of self-love.

There is a blind woman who sits by the road-side, in my neighbourhood, knitting stockings, in the hope of alms. I have seen scores of poor persons drop a half-penny each into her lap as they passed. I never saw one well-dressed person imitate the example. Every poor person feels that he may himself become a blind beggar. The wealthy know it to be almost impossible that they should become such. The wealthy man stops to *reason* with himself—and says to himself, “it is wrong to encourage begging.” The poor man does not stop to *reason* at all about the matter—in his case the law is undisturbed, and in full force—and he yields to it instant obedience.

But even among the wealthy, the agreement of the ratio of preference with the probability of repayment is distinctly traceable. Their acts of courtesy, and little kindnesses and civilities are chiefly confined to their own class. And I fear it must be generally allowed that their acts of public charity find a strong motive in the applause—in the character for benevolence—which such acts win—not from the objects of their charity—but from their *own class*.

I think no one who has been an observer of the manners and habits of men, can deny that the readiness to serve and oblige one's neighbour is much greater among the poor than among the wealthy—in *proportion to the means* of each.

The *disposition*, therefore, to do to others as we would have



others do to us, is weakened, not strengthened, as society advances towards cultivation and refinement—and the *duty* is less cheerfully and less constantly fulfilled.

If you think there is anything in my mathematics having a tendency to disorganize society or burst its bonds, I can only say that you wilfully pervert them—for they have no such tendency. I say to you: “serve your neighbour.” But I also say: “serve yourself first.” For there is no intelligible reason or motive why you should injure yourself to serve another—since it is clearly just as great an offence against God to injure yourself, as it is to injure another man. If it make no difference in the crime whether Mr. A. injures a certain Mr. B. or a certain Mr. C., so neither can it make any difference whether he injure a certain Mr. A.—that is, himself. In either case, a man is injured—and that *one fact alone* constitutes the offence. All I would do *here* is to refer effects to their *right causes*. For much ignorance and mischief have arisen to mankind from attributing the effects to which I here allude to *wrong causes*.

Serve all—be kind to all. But if you ask me, *why?* I answer: “in order that all may serve *you*, and be kind to *you*.”

B.

This is a cold and most icy philosophy.

A.

I know not whether my philosophy be hot or cold. I only know it is the philosophy of fact—that is, truth—and that same *warm* philosophy—which is, indeed, nothing more than a morbid warmth of *feeling*—has inflicted great evils on mankind, much and many of which, I fear, are now irreparable—and will remain so until, having reached their acme, indignant nature shall take the matter into her own hands, and cure the malady by so severe an operation as shall almost destroy the life of the patient.

B.

You said some time since that there is no such thing as what Mr. Thomas Paine calls the “inalienable” rights of man. Have not all men an “inalienable” right to the possession of their limbs, and to the produce of their own labor?

A.

That is to say, “is it *ordered and commanded* by God that all

men shall preserve their limbs, and enjoy the fruits of their own labor?" If there be any such *order* or *command* from God—that is, law of nature—then we have nothing to do but open our eyes and look, and we shall SEE the fact, if fact it be, just as easily as we can see the fact that stones everywhere fall to the ground. But do we see that such is the fact? *Do* all men preserve their limbs to their life's end? *Do* all men enjoy the fruits of their own labor? *Are* no man's limbs, and the produce of no man's labor, ever "*alienated*" from him for the pleasure or profit of others? On the contrary, have not men in all ages of the world (and more so at the present moment, than in any past time whatever) been constantly liable to lose their limbs by accidents—not to mention other numerous causes? And have I not already informed you of the law, and SHOWN YOU THE FACT, that *everywhere* the weak are subject to the strong, and must frequently, therefore, yield up the fruits of their labor to those who have strength to compel submission? Each particular man is ordered by nature to keep his limbs safe, and to enjoy the fruits of his own labor. But nothing can be more manifest than that the *order to do this* must be limited by the *power to do this*.

The law, therefore, plainly extends no farther than this, viz. "that all men have a right—that is, an order from God—to preserve their own limbs, and enjoy the fruits of their own labor—so far as they have the *power to do so*."

Mr. Paine's Rights of Man is a book full of strong and acute reasoning. But it all crumbles to pieces like a house of cards, since it is deduced out of *false premises*. For there are no SUCH THINGS as "inalienable rights of man." But if you say there are—then I reply, "show them to me!"

Every man has a right—that is, an order of nature—to all he can get. And if you ask me my authority for asserting that such a law exists, I do not attempt to mystify you by any hocus-pocus of words—but I tell you to open your eyes and *look*, and *see* the fact, and behold the law everywhere in operation. But this law does NOT lead to robbery and oppression, as such thinkers as the Spectator will, I know, be ready enough to cry out. Its direct tendency is to the preservation of social

order and consent of purpose. For the same law which would induce me to satisfy the cravings of my self-love by oppressing you, also impels you to resist the aggression. And if you be physically weaker than I, than others will make common cause with you, and so neutralize my strength. And I, observing that from any attempt to oppress you, there could result nothing but ultimate defeat and punishment to myself, abstain from the attempt. And an overwhelming majority, observing that repeated acts of individual oppression, and attempts to resist it, would keep the community in constant turmoil, and interfere with that unity and consent of purpose necessary to the protection and well-being of the whole, so that *all* would become losers, soon took these matters into their own hands, erected themselves (the majority) into a tribunal, and made certain laws and regulations by which to determine all disputes. And the superior strength of the majority is so great as to compel obedience from the minority, without trouble and disturbance to the community at large.

And it is the duty of this minority to obey the commands of this majority. But this duty is not a duty which this minority owes to this majority—but which it OWES TO ITSELF—in order that it may escape the punishment which otherwise the majority will inflict upon it. For although it is *ordered* by nature that the few shall yield their interests to the many, yet it is not *ordered* by nature that they shall do so *willingly*, but only in order that their interests may not suffer in a still greater degree *by the punishment which will follow resistance*.

It is not the few who are *ordered* by nature to say to the many, “we will yield our interests to yours *because you are many*,” but it is the many who are *ordered* to say to the few, “you shall yield to us your interests because you are *weak*, and we are *strong enough to compel you*, and punish resistance.”

The law, therefore, which *orders* every man to get *all he can*, also *orders* him to get it *honestly*—that is, according to the laws of his community—that is, according to what the majority have decided *shall be considered* honest. And he does this in order *to avoid punishment*, and not from any absurd *abstract principle* of honesty—for there is no such thing. *Everything* is honest



which is lawful. Since, if the law be put out of the question, who shall decide as to what is honest and what dishonest? If it be not decided by the *opinion* of the majority, where is the standard by which it shall be determined? And it must be remembered that public opinion, although not a *written* law, is nevertheless a law as stringent, and as capable of avenging its own infraction, as the written law itself. ALL men are honest ONLY to avoid punishment, either in the form of disgrace or corporal infliction—that is, either from pride or fear.

## EDUCATION.

## B.

Is it ordered and commanded by nature—that is, is it right—that the PEOPLE should use diligent means to acquire knowledge—that is, to educate themselves?

## A.

Look abroad. Can you find any such law? Can you see it in operation? Can you show it me? You cannot—for there is no such law. You cannot show me even a single instance in which THE PEOPLE of any country have educated THEMSELVES. All human duties, with the exception of the love of offspring, are debts which men owe to *themselves*. Even religion is a duty which men owe to *themselves*, for it is the hope of *reward* which makes men religious, and without that hope they would not be religious. But education is not a duty which the people owe to themselves, for it is not necessary to their happiness. If it were, the law of self-love would compel them to seek it. But the people (of course I speak collectively, and of the great body) *never* do seek it. The people *never* educate, nor attempt to educate, *themselves*—nor to civilize *themselves*—nor to cultivate *themselves*. Why? Because they do not desire education or cultivation. But why do they not desire it? Because they are happy, and perfectly contented without it. Go back to what may be called the very source of popular education—the discovery of the art of printing. Was this discovery the result of the combined efforts of a people? No—it resulted from the efforts of a single individual eagerly and intently employed—in

what?—in compassing his own individual and private aggrandisement. Did he not, as long as he could, keep his discovery a *secret*, that his emoluments might be the greater? What cared old Faust for mankind? or whether his discovery would turn out a blessing or a curse? Did he say to himself, when he began his invention: “Lo! I will gird up my loins, and concentrate my energies, and bestow a blessing on mankind?” Not he! He only said: “Lo! I will put money in my purse!” It was no “*instinctive wish to know*” which produced the art of printing, or any other art or science whatever. There is no such thing as an “*instinctive wish to know*”—but there most certainly *would have been*, had knowledge been necessary to the happiness of mankind. Whence proceeded the science of chemistry? From an “*instinctive wish to know?*” No—but from the instinctive wish of the alchymists to convert *lead into gold*. Look at children—do you observe in them any “*instinctive wish to know?*” On the contrary, is it not often necessary to drive knowledge into them with a *whip*? Are children naturally fond of school? If an “*instinctive wish to know*” were a part of man’s nature, all children would cry to be sent to school as universally and surely as they now cry for food.

All the arts and sciences are cultivated—all knowledge is sought—with *one sole aim*—and that one aim is—like old Faust’s and the alchymists’—to put *money in the purse*—with the few solitary exceptions of here and there a man who, having already money enough, and being in want of *something to do*, has sought amusement in study, and reputation in learning.

At this very moment while I am writing the words, knowledge of every sort, both of the arts and sciences, from that of the astronomer royal down through all its grades to the very cutter of corners, is as unquestionably a matter of trade—a matter of money-getting—a matter of livelihood—as the art of the shoemaker or tallow chandler.

It was soon discovered by the shrewd few that knowledge is **POWER**—and not only power, but **PROFIT** too. Then it was that this strong-headed few began to seize upon the facilities which printing offered them to acquire knowledge, in order that, through it, they might arrive at wealth, power, and distinction. These

were the prizes all had in view, and these were the prizes which many obtained.

Up rose then another set of men—well-meaning, but weak—weak as water—calling themselves instructors of the people, friends of the poor, intellectual benefactors of mankind. And these men, too shallow to look beneath the surface of things, and not perceiving that knowledge is power only while it is scarce, and that, like money, it loses its value, in proportion as it becomes plentiful—these men began to exclaim, in the hearing of the people: “has not God given the same mental faculties to the poor as to the rich? Has he not given to all men an intellect in order to distinguish them from the brutes of the field? and would he have done so had he not intended it to be cultivated and made fruitful?” The ninnies! They might as well exclaim that, since the pockets of the poor men are as large as the pockets of the rich, that, *therefore*, they ought to be as well filled. Or that, since the rich man has as many legs and arms as the poor man, he ought, *therefore*, to work as hard. They forget that, if every man’s house were filled with gold, every man would be as poor as the half-naked barbarian.

These men, however, set up the cry for universal education, and fancied they were conferring a signal favor on the people. They claimed it for them as their **RIGHT**—knowing no more, all the time, what they meant by the word *right*, than the man in the moon knows of the man in the iron mask. And the people themselves, hearing these men claiming for them, as their right, something or other which was to ennoble their nature, and convert hedgers and ditchers into Newtons and Herschels, naturally enough joined in the cry.

Then there arose a third set of men who, perceiving that the people had been played upon, and spirited into the belief that none were their friends but those who joined the cry for education, added *their* voices to swell the shout—for the sole purpose of currying favor with the people and the educationists—as a means of lifting themselves into power and place. Up sprung then, like mushrooms, literary institutions for the poor, under the patronage of great names, all over the country; and cheap publications fell everywhere in showers upon the heads of the



people. And invitations and exhortations to the poor to read ! read ! read ! rang through the air, morning, noon, and night, like the Muezzin's call to prayer, from the tops of their gilded minarets.

No, my friend—it is not that the people bear within them any natural desire to know—nor that they *feel* knowledge to be necessary to their happiness. If they did they would require *no urging* to prosecute it. But it is that *others*—actuated by the law of their own self-love—some obeying the genuine law—some a disturbed law—that is to say, some from purely selfish motives—others from infatuation and fanaticism—have thrust it down the people's throats, coaxing and urging them to swallow it, with the assurance that it is physic which will do them good—forgetting that too much physic, or physic of any kind when not necessary, is but another name for poison. Why, I should be glad to know—why should not knowledge, like money or any other good, fancied or real, be left to every man to acquire as he best can by his own exertions—and to be sought only by those who desire to possess it ? Why all this coaxing, and urging, and flattering, and persuasion ?

To seek knowledge, then, is not a DUTY which the people owe to themselves, since it does not contribute one iota to their happiness. And they have no RIGHT to seek it, for there is no law of nature which *orders* them to do so—any more, at least, than it is the right—the duty of the great body of the people to be all shoemakers, or all tailors—for knowledge and shoemaking are but different means of supplying the wants of the body. As to intellectual wants—I have long since shown that there are no such things in rerum naturâ.

Men can no more be all rich in knowledge than they can be rich in money—nor would they be a jot the happier if they could. Knowledge can no more bestow happiness than wealth can—and wealth proverbially has no such power.

Who is competent to say, and who would believe it if it were said, that we are a happier people now than we were five hundred years ago ?

B.

Mr. George Combe has already said so.

## A.

True—but was he *competent* to say so? Has he offered a shadow of proof? Not a shadow. He says that man is an *improving* animal, and that men were happier in the feudal ages than in a state of barbarism—and now than in the feudal ages. Where is the proof of this bold assertion? Is it to be found in the discontented murmurs which ring throughout all the land? In the daily increase of disease? Increase of madness? Increase of suicide? Increase and enlargement of union work-houses? Mr. Combe's work had an extraordinary sale. Why? Because it gave back to mankind their own prejudices instead of combatting them, which is the true secret of most popular works. They furnish them with new arguments in favor of old fallacies—put old arguments in a new light—defend ancient prejudices—assist mankind to gull themselves—and the multitude hug the smooth-tongued flatterers, and feast delightedly on the honey of their breath. Among works professing to be profound, I have seldom read a more jejune performance than the *Constitution of Man*.

When we pity the distresses of others, it has been shrewdly and truly observed, that fancy places ourselves, for the time, in the situation of the distressed, and the pity we feel is, in fact, pity for ourselves. It is thus with us when we pity the condition of our rude forefathers. We fancy ourselves, with all our modern habits and notions, and acquired sensibilities about us, in *their* situation, and then we pity ourselves for what we know we should feel *now* were we suddenly thrown back into their rude habits.

What does Mr. Combe mean by *improvement*? If men be happy and contented, their condition *CANNOT* be improved, let it be what it may—since happiness and contentment are the *ne plus ultra* of all human exertion. No mathematical axiom can be clearer than this.

The arguments against any high degree of national cultivation and refinement are indeed manifold and overwhelming. First, the great mass of the people, almost every hour of whose time, and nearly the whole of whose attention, must be devoted to labor, can by no possibility ever acquire any great degree of actual and real knowledge. A whole life devoted to nothing else

is scarcely sufficient for this. All they can do is to learn to read the *opinions of others*. And thus they are laid open to become the dupes and the tools of all who are willing to pander, for a profit, to their passions and prejudices—and to be made discontented and unhappy only because they are persuaded to believe that they ought to be so. Having no opinion of *their own*, and no knowledge whereon to found one, they are led to adopt any opinions from any pretended friend who has tact enough to state them plausibly.

IN ALL ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE THE GREAT MASS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE, INCLUDING THE GREAT MASS OF RETAIL TRADERS, ARE AS IGNORANT NOW AS THEY WERE THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO. It is true they no longer believe in ghosts and witches, and if they see a man reading algebra, they no longer believe that he must necessarily have dealings with the devil. But knowledge is still, as ever, in the hands of the few.

The march of intellect, as it regards the masses, is little more than an alteration of habits and manners—a little nearer approximation, in manners and dress, to the manners and dress of gentlemen. But the masses cannot all be gentlemen! Why, then, should they be taught to ape gentlemen in their manners and dress? Let any man of a philosophic mind and some general scientific knowledge converse for five minutes with a working man—not merely a day-laborer, but any man whose life is spent in the daily occupations of trade—and he will soon find that, although he has learned to *talk* fluently enough—although he has learned to *retail* the opinions of others, and to support them too by all the current reasoning of the day, derived from the cheap literature to which alone he has access; and which, in order that it may *sell*, must administer to the pride, and self-love, and personal prejudices of its readers—he will find, if he take him a little *deeper* than this—if he ask him for a *reason for his reasoning*—if he throw him upon the resources of his *own mind*—he will “bring him up all standing,” as the sailors say. It is most ridiculously absurd to suppose that they who have had to toil from twelve to sixteen hours a-day from boyhood, for their bread, can do more than catch



the tone and spirit of the opinions of the hour. And it is but natural that they should greedily adopt those, right or wrong, which come to them glittering with the semblance of benefit to themselves, pity for their lot in life, and pretended anxiety to improve and elevate it. And with the opinions come also the specious arguments ready constructed to support them. They have neither the time, nor the inclination, nor the power, nor the means to obtain the power, to examine these arguments and ascertain their validity—and if they had all these, their pride and self-love would be almost certain to warp their judgment, and bias their decision. The masses have no time to STUDY!—they can only READ!—and even their reading must ever be of the most superficial kind—not continuous, but practised at short intervals—and only sufficient to keep them in a state of continual excitement—to oppress and sour them with a sense of fancied injustice—and make them discontented with the lot whereunto it has pleased God to call them. The so-called knowledge of the multitude is merely the phantom OPINION. And this unsubstantial SEMBLANCE—this counterfeit presentment—this false light—this delusive mirage—pictured by their pretended friends, and constantly exhibited before them, they mistake for the solid realities of true wisdom.

They catch the shadow from the water, and hug it for the substance.

This aping by the multitude of the manners, habits, and dress of the wealthy—this cocking-up of the nose, and snuffing of the air, and exclaiming: “we are as good as you! are we not men like yourselves?” has done infinite mischief. It has caused the wealthy to withdraw themselves more closely within the walls of the castles of their own consequence. It has broken the link between the rich and the poor. That link is *homage*. As I have before observed, all services are bought and sold, and paid for in some coin or other. The only coin in which the poor can pay the rich for their succour and support is *homage*. The poor have refused to pay the price, and taunted the others with being no better than themselves. And the rich have buttoned up their pockets, and shut up their hearts, and retired within the circle of their own class. They will no longer mingle

with a tenantry, which boasts itself as good as its landlord—nor chat familiarly and enter into the private interests of a servant, who boasts himself as good as his master, and whose conduct and manners prove that he thinks so.

Men are not angels! If I observe a man walking by my side in the street, and mocking and mowing at me, and imitating my gait, and if I hear him calling across the street to another, that he is quite as good as myself, in spite of my black coat, &c. &c., and if he finally conclude his amusement by demanding of me a shilling to buy a dinner, it is something more than probable that I should button up my pocket and say, “no, my friend.” But if he had civilly, and with those external semblances of respect which every man’s self-love *will demand* under such circumstances, *although* every man knows well enough that they are semblances *merely*—if he had, as we say, made his request properly, assuring me that he was really in want—the probability is, that his request would not be denied. Your abstract philosophers will say that, notwithstanding the man’s manner, if he be really in distress, I am equally bound to succour him. To which I can only reply that, I do not *feel the bond*, and therefore my conduct cannot be coerced by it. But I *do feel* my self-love offended, and therefore my conduct *is* coerced by *that*. All this is sufficiently well understood and practised in the more immediate concerns of life. When a customer goes into a tradesman’s shop, the tradesman does not draw himself up, put on his hat, stick his thumbs into his sides, and say: “Sir, I am as good as you, though I stand behind this counter.” But he says, by his respectful manner: “Sir, I am obliged to you for your custom.” Both buyer and seller know very well, that in reality all this is mere “leather and prunella”—and that in fact there is no obligation on either side. But what then? Man’s pride and self-love *will have it*. Those who have the power to serve *will be paid*—for we serve others to please *ourselves*, not *them*, as I have already shown. The payment which power demands from weakness is homage—a tacit acknowledgment of inferiority—and not a loud-tongued claim of perfect equality. The rich know just as well as the poor that their superiority is merely adventitious—and if

the poor did not offend their self-love by constantly throwing the fact in their faces, they themselves would be, on all proper occasions, the first to acknowledge it. If weakness would gain sympathy from power, weakness must condescend to soothe, and lay aside pretension—and not irritate, by a haughty assumption of equality. The rich have no more *right* to serve the poor *for nothing*, than the poor have to labor for the rich *for nothing*. The poor demand *money* for *their* services—the rich demand *homage* for *theirs*. Both are equally at liberty to refuse to pay the *price demanded*—but then they cannot expect the *services*.

I repeat it—the great body of the people are just as ignorant now as they were three hundred years ago—in all essential knowledge. By which I mean that philosophical knowledge which deals with principles, and the laws and constitution of the universe—of course including the laws and constitution of human nature. The people, I know, can now construct machinery, weave fabrics, and do many things which they could not formerly. But herein they do but *work at a trade which has been taught them*, as they did or could have done ages ago. The scientific knowledge necessary to the production of these new inventions was furnished by a *few individuals* intently labouring to devise the means of their own aggrandisement—they did not result from the joint efforts of the great mass of an educated people—actuated by that pretended law—“an instinctive wish to know!”

## B.

Nevertheless some very important inventions have proceeded from the heads of the working classes, and could never have been brought about but for the universal diffusion of knowledge which resulted from the art of printing.

## A.

True—and there would be some force in your objection if you could prove that these new inventions have contributed to the *happiness* of mankind. But I hope to show presently that they have not done so. I hope to show that knowledge, of whatever kind, although it gives *power* to man, has no power itself to give him *happiness*. But your objection is naught on another account. For I am speaking of the *great body generally*, and not of the *clever few exceptions*.



Look at the Chinese—a people removed but a step or two above barbarism—as compared with us. Are the people of England happier than the people of China? The Chinese are said to be the happiest people, as a body, on the face of the globe. Look at yon half-naked urchin chasing a butterfly in yonder field—exulting, laughing, and shouting, as his rags shake in the wind. You may dress him in fine linen, teach him to speak by the card, and to enter a room with the grace of a Chesterfield. But can you make him happier than he is? I say—no! You may make him a *different*, but not a *happier*, being. And it is this *difference alone* which the world calls *improvement*.

One argument, therefore, against all efforts to educate the people is—that it is IMPOSSIBLE. All you can do is to teach them to read—and to teach them to read is only to teach them to be led by the nose—to be gulled out of the sense of their own true interests—and to be discontented with themselves.

Secondly—and here I speak, not merely of the people, but of all seekers after knowledge—the law (if there were any such) which commanded man to seek knowledge would flatly contradict the law of self-preservation. Even those who seek knowledge in obedience to the law of self-love, i. e. merely for amusement and celebrity, do so in obedience to a *disturbed* law of self-love—for it is a self-love which does not lead to self-preservation—but in a contrary direction. It is a self-love which defeats its own object—for the object of self-love is self-preservation. Study confers a species of happiness it is true. But it is a happiness for the sake of happiness *merely*—and a happiness which tends directly to defeat the object of all happiness. For the object of all pleasure and happiness is to make man enjoy life—to make it worth his while to live—to live and propagate his species—in order that the end of his creation may be fulfilled, and his species endure, and not perish. This is the end and aim of all human happiness, and this end and aim the pursuit of knowledge has a direct tendency to defeat.

For it is impossible to deny, that the studious and sedentary habits necessary to mental cultivation frequently induce premature death, and NEVER FAIL to prejudice the health both of the

student and his offspring—who, even in their infancy, are already “sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought”—a “pale cast” conferred on them by the *thought and thoughtful habits* of their sickly parents.

Had the pursuit of knowledge formed any part of the law of man’s nature, are we not *compelled* to believe, from all that we see of nature’s works, that he would have been so constituted as to derive health and strength, and *not* sickness and death, from obedience to that law? In deprecating any particular habit, such for instance as spirit-drinking, gormandizing, &c., is it not considered a sufficient reason that it *injures our health*? And if the pursuit of knowledge injures the health of the pursuers, why should not that consideration alone be deemed a sufficient reason for deprecating the pursuit, as well in this as in every other instance? The fact that the pursuit of knowledge is injurious to the health and strength of the pursuers, and dangerous to life, is as clear a proof that it is an unlawful pursuit—as clearly a divine command that “*man shall not pursue knowledge*”—as though the visible finger of God were seen writing it daily on the disc of the sun.

The law, therefore, (were there any such) which commands men to pursue knowledge is directly opposed to that other law, the law of self-preservation, which commands every man to preserve, with all possible care, his health and strength—and obedience to *both* is impossible. But it is too monstrous to conceive that Infinite Wisdom can have issued laws which it is impossible to obey. But the law of self-preservation no man can doubt to be a law of nature? What follows? Why, that the pursuit of knowledge is *not* a command of nature—that it cannot be prosecuted without a *breach* of a law of nature, viz. that of self-preservation—and that, *therefore*, it is, in the sight of the God of nature, an unlawful pursuit—having a tendency to frustrate the ends of his own laws.

Thirdly, a highly educated condition of society is a column with vice and crime for its foundation-stone, and premature death and disease for its crowning capital. I say that vice and crime form the very foundation whereon the structure of society in every cultivated community is erected—and that they cannot

be removed without the immediate overthrow and total disorganization of the entire fabric. I say that vice and crime are absolutely *necessary* to high cultivation—that if the condition of society as it now exists be desirable, then vice and crime are of necessity also desirable—and that they who offer up their daily prayers for the total annihilation of vice and crime, know not what they ask.

Let us suppose their prayers granted. Let us suppose that, by the interposition of a miracle, vice and crime were at once annihilated, and that to-morrow morning every man, woman, and child were destined to rise from their beds all *perfectly honest and good*. Millions of human beings must soon perish of starvation, or subsist on charity.

I am not sufficiently conversant with the various trades and callings to enumerate to you all those which are supported, directly or indirectly, by vice and crime; and which must, therefore, on the cessation of vice and crime, cease to give support to men. But I will mention a few instances—sufficient to give your mind the right clue—and then leave you to follow out *that clue* in all its multiplied ramifications.

The first class of men who would be instantly thrown out of employment, would be that in some way or other dependent on the law—an immense class, consisting of judges, barristers, attorneys, solicitors, bailiffs, turnkeys, law booksellers, law publishers, parchment manufacturers, engrossers, law stationers, law printers, and all the nine farrow of that sow. For each of the barristers, attorneys, and solicitors, must be allowed two servants and one clerk, supported by them. Here then is a number of human beings amounting to four times the number of all the lawyers in the kingdom, besides the other persons more remotely connected with the law, which I have just mentioned, who would be instantly thrown upon the various parishes of the country, compelled to starve or beg for a livelihood.

Another immense class would consist of locksmiths and their servants. *Their* vocation would be gone too. Locks would be utterly useless, and the locksmiths and their servants, too, must beg or starve. Then come the makers of bolts and bars, and other contrivances against theft, with *their* servants. The whole



body of policemen and thief-takers would also no longer be required. The army would instantly be disbanded, and the soldiers distributed, with the policemen and the others, all over the country in search of food. Her Majesty's sailors and ship-builders, and dock-yard-men, must also go to swell the number. To these must be added the military gun-makers, sword-makers, military tailors, cannon founders, and gunpowder manufacturers. Two-thirds of the great body of medical men (with their servants) would be unable to subsist by their profession; and the whole body of clergymen (with their servants) would be instantly extinct. Another large class would consist of prostitutes, thieves, brothel keepers, and a countless host of the keepers of low public-houses and places of vicious resort.

All those persons, now destined to die a premature death from intemperance, would live and must find food. The newspapers, too, in town and country, with an immense multitude supported by them, would be nearly if not altogether extinct. For when you have taken from any paper all its police reports, its parliamentary debates, (for there would then be clearly little or no debating, and indeed no House of Commons or Peers at all) its histories of murders, of robberies, of suicides—its trials of criminals, of minor offenders, &c. &c., how much of the paper would be left? Certainly not enough to pay for its publication. This countless multitude, having become destitute of the means of living would no longer be able, by their custom, to contribute towards the livelihood of various tradesmen, coach-builders, tailors, linen drapers, boot-makers, harness-makers, whip-makers, silk-mercers, jewellers, pastry-cooks, wine merchants, lamp-makers, carpet-weavers, cabinet-makers, cum multis aliis. And thus another numerous body of men would be thrown out of employment. A little reflection will also prove to you that it must put an almost entire stop to the cultivation of the sciences, by removing most of the inducements to study. Now, I ask you, how are these people to live? You will be ready to say, perhaps, that they must seek other employment. Other employment! How? where? There is not sufficient employment for the hands which are already idle, is there? At present, this immense multitude of men, at least a large portion of it, are

themselves employers, and *still* there is not employment enough. When you have not only subtracted this large number from the number of employers, but added it to the number of those who want employment, how in the name of common arithmetic, with a diminished number of employers and a hundred-fold augmented demand for employment, is employment to be found? It is manifestly impossible. The whole order of society must instantly be broken up, and an equal distribution of all property made amongst the whole—or famished multitudes must perish, and the streets, way-sides, and hedge-rows, be thickly strown with the dying and the dead—starved victims to the abolition of vice and crime. This is not a fanciful picture. Talk the matter over with yourself, and you will find it the sober truth.

This rude sketch will be sufficient to open your eyes to the effect of the abolition of vice and crime, although I have not enumerated one half of the classes of men who would be rendered destitute by the advent of the reign of Innocence.

An entire freedom from vice and crime is a condition wholly incompatible with a state of high cultivation. If we would erect the one, we *must* take the other for its foundation. It would be easy to show that it is impossible for men, living in a state of perfect innocence, to arrive at any high degree of cultivated, educated, refinement.\*

Fourthly—and here I address myself to those who may be styled, emphatically, religious persons—there is no scripture warrant for the pursuit of “worldly,” or, as it is sometimes called, “carnal knowledge,” or “wisdom of the flesh.” On the contrary, *worldly* knowledge is almost everywhere deprecated. “Faith,” we are told, “cometh by HEARING”—not by reading. We nowhere find Christ inculcating the study of the sciences on his disciples, nor any other kind of worldly knowledge, mathematical, chemical, or mechanical.

“Knowledge puffeth up,” 1 Cor. viii. 1.

\* I am indebted for this view of the effect of the abolition of vice and crime to a gentleman who is, I believe, about to publish a work, treating the matter more elaborately, and at large.

“A prudent man CONCEALETH” (not spreadeth) “knowledge,” Prov. xii. 23.

“He that increaseth knowledge increaseth SORROW,” Eccl. i. 18.

“Every man is brutish by knowledge,” says Jeremiah, speaking of the people of Babylon, chap. li. 17.

And what was the Divine injunction to Adam that he should not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—“for on the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”—what was this but a caution to mankind, that so long as they continued to live a life of primitive simplicity, satisfied to render implicit obedience to the laws of their nature, and did not presume to *improve* their condition according to any visionary schemes of their own, they should enjoy the highest degree of happiness which is compatible with their condition—but that, if they presumed to substitute their own opinion as to what is meet and proper for their wants, in the room of the judgment of their Creator, as evinced in the laws of man’s nature and condition—if they presumed to quarrel with their own state—to say, “this would be better and that would be better, and this would be an improvement, and that would be an improvement, in our condition—this is evil and that is evil—this is good and that is good—and these are the habits and manners of brutes, and therefore beneath the dignity of man’s INTELLECTUAL nature—let us, then, spurn it!—let us elevate ourselves in the scale of nature”—in a word, if they presumed to make artificial distinctions *of their own* between good and evil—distinctions having no existence in nature—existing only in the habits, manners, and opinions, of particular classes of men—that they should lose the happiness placed within their reach, and entail upon themselves precisely what we see they *have* entailed upon themselves—disease, misery, and premature death?

The spread of education among the multitude is every way hostile to religion. It teaches them to substitute reason instead of faith—it teaches them to make a bad use of the unfortunate squabbles about creeds, and nice distinctions—it teaches them to say: “how are we to know which of all these disputants is right, and whom we are to follow in order to be saved?” “Can



the Bible really be so obscure a book that the most learned cannot comprehend it? How then are we, the unlearned, to understand it?"

The ministers of religion are nowhere taught to *educate* the people, but to *preach the gospel* to them!

"Nothing can be more unfounded," says J. F. W. Herschel, "than the objection which has been taken, in limine, by persons, well-meaning perhaps, certainly narrow-minded, against the study of natural philosophy, and indeed against all science—that it fosters, in its cultivators, an undue and overweening self-conceit, leads them to doubt the immortality of the soul, and to scoff at revealed religion. Its natural effect, we may confidently assert, on every *well-constituted* mind is and must be the direct contrary."

But ARE the minds of the great mass of the multitude *well constituted*? Is the multitude more prone to reason *correctly* or *incorrectly*?

But, like all men who undertake to advocate a false position, Mr. Herschel very soon falls into the trap of self-contradiction. He contradicts his own position in the very *next* page. He there says: "the character of the *true* philosopher is to hope all things NOT IMPOSSIBLE, and to believe all things NOT UNREASONABLE." Now there is no creed on the face of the earth which does not contain articles of faith which are both *impossible* and *unreasonable*—according to the judgment of human reason. And it must be remembered that our reason is the only means by which man can decide as to what is possible or impossible, reasonable or unreasonable. If our reason be rejected as a guide to the decision between possibilities and impossibilities, then all things, at once, however monstrous, become possible and reasonable. The christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity, as far as *mere human reason* can go, is both impossible and unreasonable—and miracles would not be miracles if they were in accordance with the experience of human reason. It is their being opposed to reason, which *constitutes* them miracles.

According to Mr. Herschel, therefore, the "true philosopher" must reject these doctrines! What, then, are the half-educated and superficial philosophers of the multitude likely to do?

The true philosopher, even if he be not himself emphatically a religious man, will nevertheless support religion with all his energies, if it be only as a means of keeping the multitude in awe—in peace and good order—and as a means of cementing the bonds of social government. But on the multitude themselves—the party to be awed into peace and quiet—the effect would be just the contrary—viz. to induce them to throw off all restraint.

The *reading multitude* have already discovered that certain portions of the Bible have been decided, by human reason, *not to be sacred*—the book of Enoch, for instance, part, if not the whole—the Apocrypha—Ecclesiastes—the book of Job, &c. I believe these, or most of these, have been admitted by the teachers of religion themselves not to belong to the word of God. And the celebrated Dr. Parr, whose name it is sufficient to mention, declared his belief that the entire Book of Revelation was *not of sacred origin*—and its author *not of sound mind*. Is it for the interests of religion that the multitude should read, and talk, and reason on such things? *Can* they reason about them without having their religious faith shaken? If faith in the word of God be necessary to salvation, that faith is not lessened, nor rendered less efficacious, although the book, containing the word of God, may happen to contain other matters not properly belonging to it, and although these latter may be mistaken for a part of his word. Faith in these latter does no injury, as it seems to me, to faith in the former. When the multitude *read* of these things they are apt to say—for I have heard them over and over again—“if these portions of the Bible, or if *any* portion of it, is to be thus rejected solely on the testimony of *human reason*, then all that portion of it which is *left*, rests solely on the authority of human reason also—for it is *left* only because human reason has decided that it *shall* be left—and is, therefore, *only* to be held sacred because human reason has decided that it *shall* be held sacred. At this rate, how do I know that, by and bye, *other portions* of the sacred writings shall not also be decided by human reason to be *not sacred*. If this be allowable, then it is not on the Bible that I lean for salvation, but on the human reason of the biblical commentators! It is not in the

*Bible* that I believe, but in the commentators—mere human reasoning men, like myself. Well, then—since religion is certainly not a matter of learning—but a matter of reasoning merely—I will become my own commentator. And I will believe only so much of the *Bible* as I can reconcile with my own reason.”

I put it to any unprejudiced man whether this be not the sort of argument likely to arise in the minds of a *reading people*. And I put it also, to any man competent to give an opinion, whether infidelity be not everywhere on the increase.

It was but lately that I saw the walls of a large chapel—perhaps the largest in London—placarded with bills, like those of an auctioneer or quack medicine-vendor, with the words, in large black letters, “Christianity versus Infidelity”—and it has become the common practice in London to advertise sermons by placarding walls, after the manner of blacking-makers and quack-doctors. Surely this confounding of the mode of treating sacred and religious matters with the mode in which the ordinary matters of business are transacted (and that, too, not of the most reputable character) has a greater tendency to bring religion into contempt, and to reduce it to a mere matter of trade, then anything that ever was written by such men as Volney or Voltaire.

If religion could but “*save herself from her friends*,” she would have nothing to fear from her enemies.

Fifthly, knowledge is not happiness, nor necessary to happiness—nor is ignorance, misery. On the contrary, the evidence of our senses proves that happiness is as compatible with ignorance as with knowledge. Happiness is the one thing needful, of which all men are in search—the one sole object of all human exertion. But men have lost sight of the end in the violence of their discussions concerning the means. The question is not, *How to know?*—but, *How to be happy?* Men cry up knowledge as though it were the end of all human existence—whereas, happiness being the *end*, knowledge is but a QUESTIONABLE means—*questionable*, yet never *questioned*! “Knowledge,” say they, “is power.” Good—it is power. “Knowledge raises us to a greater elevation above brute animals.” Good again—it *does so*. “Knowledge is necessary *emollire mores*—to refine the



manners—to distinguish a cultivated people from the mere barbarian.” True again. “Without knowledge we should be living in mere huts, and fed on milk and acorns—which is food for hogs.” This is *not* true—but let it pass. And now I ask : “What then?” You have entirely begged the question—which is not how to win power—how to elevate ourselves above the brute—how to soften the manners—how to distinguish ourselves from barbarians—nor how to live in fine houses, and feed on French fricasees—but how to be happy ! Are fine houses and French fricasees necessary to human happiness ?

It is with knowledge as it is with wine, and spirits, and other luxuries. Those who have *acquired a taste for them*, and can afford to buy them, like them so well that they will not believe they can be injurious—and pity those who cannot obtain them—fancying that they cannot be *quite* happy without them. It is precisely thus with knowledge. And he who teaches the people the desire for knowledge, is guilty of the same folly as he who should teach them the desire for wine.

Again—the educated pity and decry ignorance. Why ? Because ignorance is incompatible with happiness ? No. But because they *feel* that, having now acquired a taste for letters, they would not like to be ignorant *themselves*—just as a man who has acquired a taste for wine would not like to be deprived of its use.

Another reason for the desire to polish the manners of the people is, that the educated and refined do not like to live surrounded by persons of rude and coarse manners. It is painful to them. So they set about endeavouring *emollire mores*—to soften and chasten their manners. But herein it is quite plain that they are consulting their *own pleasure*, and not the happiness of the people.

It is painful to the highly educated and delicately nurtured to see, and even to read of, rude persons breaking each other’s heads at a fair. So they forthwith determine to abolish fairs, that no more heads may be broken. But herein it is merely their own morbid delicacy of feeling which they are consulting—and not the happiness of those persons. Every man must be happy after his own manners, habits and tastes. But these

improvers of human nature say, "No—you shall be happy after *our* manners, habits and tastes—not your *own*. It is painful and disgusting to us to *hear* of these doings. Therefore you must not do so any more—in order that *we* may be no more *pained* and *disgusted*. You must sit at home, and read the Penny Magazine—or walk about the fields, arm and arm, staidly, soberly, and contemplatively—and then we shall take great pleasure in looking at you." "But we don't like all this," say the people. "Never mind," say their teachers, "*we do*—and that's enough." "We have no taste for flowers," say the people. "Never mind," reply the others, "if you will only set about studying botany, it is quite wonderful what a pleasure you will take in examining daisies, and gathering butter-cups. You will find it much better then breaking each other's heads—and besides, *we* shall no longer be *annoyed and disgusted* with the horrid accounts of your rude frolics and pastimes.

It is curious to observe how ingeniously men deceive themselves as to the motives of their own actions.

Sixthly, the diffusion of knowledge is the true cause of a surplus population—which is the true cause of most of our political difficulties. And this brings me to

#### POLITICAL MATHEMATICS.

"Labor," says Adam Smith, "constitutes the wealth of nations." True. But does it constitute the HEALTH of nations? or the HAPPINESS of nations? Wine, spirit, and opium, constitute the wealth of those who deal in them. But do they constitute the health and happiness of those who use them? Lead mines and quicksilver mines constitute the wealth of their possessors—and also the wealth of those who work them—for their labor is their only wealth. But does it constitute their health and happiness—I mean of those who are *condemned to work* in these poisonous mines? Needle-pointing constitutes the wealth (at least in part) of needle-manufacturers. But does it constitute the health of the working needle-pointer? The

average duration of a needle-pointer's life is, I am told, about twenty-five or thirty years.

B.

Still, if it were not for these means of obtaining a livelihood, (pernicious and miserable though it be) those who thus obtain it would not be able to procure any livelihood at all.

A.

And would not need it—for they would never have been born.

It is a FUNDAMENTAL ERROR in legislation that we legislate for wealth, and what are called the *comforts of life*, instead of being content to legislate for *happiness* and the *necessaries of life only*. What are called the *comforts of life* are not *necessary* to happiness. *Nothing* is necessary to *happiness* but what nature has made necessary to *health and strength*. And we have *lost* happiness and contentment by attempting to be *more than happy and contented*.

The house and appurtenances of an ordinary tradesman of the present day, is a more luxurious abode than was the dwelling of the wealthiest noble some few hundreds of years ago. Is the noble happier now than he was then? or the tradesman either?—although both have, what is absurdly called, so much *improved* their condition. But how is that condition *improved* if it be not *happier*? But the truth is this. Certain small luxuries called comforts, have, from long use, become, to the upper and middling classes, INDISPENSABLE NECESSARIES to happiness. Forgetting that they have become necessities only from use and wont, and are not really so, they have come to believe them necessities to the happiness of *all*, and look with *pity* upon those who are without them—and have made insane attempts to bring them within the *reach* of all. The first effect has been to make these little luxuries be considered as necessary to respectability—that is, in the eye of public opinion, not reason. The second effect has been to send mankind racing after these fancied *necessaries to respectability* till their sinews crack, their health breaks down, and till they may be seen dropping by thousands into a premature grave—having lost life and all its *real* enjoyments literally in chasing a phantom, which, when caught,



universal experience proves to be a phantom still. For it is no sooner caught than it vanishes—and is again seen in the distance, still afar off, and still beckoning onward, and exciting its dupes to a renewed chase. And what are these *necessaries to respectability*? In millions of instances they consist of little more than a satin stock and a black coat—and in millions more, in a satin stock and a black coat—on a Sunday only. Every man is toiling to ELEVATE himself above his condition—while the intellectual pedagogues stand by, clapping their hands, and shouting in the ears of all, “rush on! rush on! elevate! elevate yourselves! elevate both mind and body!” And on they go, madly straining up the ladder on one side, only, in nineteen cases out of twenty, to tumble down, with broken legs or broken necks, on the other. And thus the various classes of men, like the waves of the ocean-tide, are perpetually hurrying after each other in a forward and a backward course—gaining nothing, yet still hurrying on—the bird for ever in the bush, and never in the hand—both waves and men obeying the same influence—the one lunar, the other lunatic. Of all that multitude who listen to the cry, “rush on! rush on!” there is not one who stops to inquire, WHEREFORE? Nor of all that multitude of human improvers, who raise the cry, is there one who could answer that simple question were it put to him.

The mischief is this—that we cannot conceive how it is possible for men to be happy unless they be so after our *own fashion*! May not the rudest country bumpkin that ever lived be as happy as the most accomplished gentleman? May not the untutored savage be as happy as any other man under the sun? May not a beggar, in his rags, with plenty of food, be as happy as a king? No man living can deny this—without denying that which has *become a proverb* in all civilized countries. What is meant, therefore, by *improving* their condition? There is no other reason than that we, who have been accustomed to OTHER things, which our foolish vanity prompts us to call BETTER things, cannot believe it possible that these persons should be happy, because they are not happy after our *own manner*.

There is no condition of life, possessing *health, strength,*

*freedom*, and *food*, which is not capable of affording as much happiness as any other condition. And it is because legislators have attempted to bestow on the multitude MORE than health, strength, freedom, and food, that so many have been, and are, *deprived of all four*—that one half of *mankind* are born only to die in infancy—that one third of the remainder are doomed to perish in early manhood—and two thirds of the remnant to toil through life, yoked to the loom and to the mill, to the shop and to the anvil, from morning till night, pale, haggard, diseased, crippled, and dwarfed, the slaves—the miserable victims and slaves—to a cultivation of knowledge which has dotted the country all over with towns, and studded the towns with manufactories, which are at once hot-houses and pest-houses—hot-houses, inasmuch as they force the multiplication of human beings until they swarm like locusts—and pest-houses, forasmuch as the beings whom they call into existence, such of them as do not perish miserably in infancy, must drag on, to the end, a life of over-tasked and unremitting exertion, which they seek to support by the stimulus of exciting drink, which, in *its* turn, saps the health, and withers the strength of those who seek its aid, and fills alike both hospital and hovel with death and disease in every variety of form.

I have already, more than once, adverted to a certain compensating principle or self-adjusting power—by means of which nature seeks to accomplish her ends, in spite of all accidental disturbances. Thus, if a man dislocate his thigh-bone out of the socket of the hip-joint, and it be not set, nature soon establishes a new bony socket, around the head of the thigh-bone, in its new position, and the man, though lame, still preserves a very useful limb. The study of surgery and physiology offers numerous and beautiful instances of this compensating principle—and so indeed does the study of nature everywhere. And what, I should like to know, are the numberless diseases, suicides, accidental deaths, deaths *by* crime and *for* crime, deaths in infancy, deaths in early manhood, premature deaths of every kind (I mean of course those which *could not* occur in a primitive state of society—and the number of those diseases and premature deaths which *can* occur in a primitive

state are as nothing when compared with the number of those resulting more or less directly from an *improved?* condition)—what, I say, are all these but so many instances of that power by which nature seeks to compensate herself for having been forced aside from her predetermined straight path, and by which she avenges herself on the disturbers of her laws.

Had it not been for this compensating and self-adjusting principle—had it not been that one half of civilized mankind perish in infancy—had it not been for the multiplication of diseases, and accidental, and otherwise premature deaths—had it not been for vice and crime which sweep men by thousands daily from the earth—had the pursuit of knowledge begun a thousand years earlier, and had its progress been as rapid and universal as its lovers and propagators desired, what had, at this moment, been the condition of man? Figures will demonstrate that the surface of the earth could not have yielded food sufficient for its inhabitants. In this United Kingdom alone we are now increasing at the rate of 400,000 every year—and the increase, be it remembered, is every day an *increasing increase*. What would have been *now* the yearly increase had the advance of knowledge, and the consequent erection and multiplication of towns and manufactories, made the population of the kingdom, five hundred years ago, what it is at this moment? And what would have been the population of the world *now*, had knowledge, and, consequently, towns and manufactories, and consequently the amount of population, been, five hundred years ago, all over the earth's surface what it is now in England?—especially had there been no compensation made in the shape of disease and premature death.

It is the effect of knowledge and the search after knowledge to withdraw men from the fields, and field-sports, and agricultural, and all rural pursuits, and to congregate them in towns—some that they may conduct their intellectual pursuits with greater facility, and a more remunerating advantage to themselves—some that they may surround themselves with pleasures and refinements, after which education and a morbid and artificial taste have made them yearn, and that they may avoid mingling with those with whose manners and habits the



same morbid tastes have made them disgusted—some that they may take advantage of the discoveries of scientific men, turn them to advantage, erect manufactories, apply them to practical purposes, and so enrich themselves, and acquire new tastes for new luxuries, afterwards, from habit, destined to become necessities, both to themselves and offspring; and the loss of which is also destined afterwards frequently to become a source of misery to themselves and others—and lastly, other some, tempted by the offer of higher wages, and rendered dissatisfied with their own condition by the rumours which reach them of the wealth and grandeur and rare doings in the cities and towns, also rush thither in the hope of becoming sharers in the manna which they fancy is perpetually falling in these wildernesses of bricks and mortar. And it is this very congregating of men together in towns—ay, and the very supplying them with abundance of food, and surrounding them with abundance of comforts, which are the true sources of excessive population, and which cause so many human beings to be born only to be wretched awhile, and die.

It is the effect of knowledge, and what are called improvements in machinery and manufactures, to make *one* poor man *rich*—to save *two* poor men from starving, and to cause *ten* to be born, to starve, and die,—if not of actual starvation, certainly of excessive labor, and consequent disease.

Even if the increase of manufactures could keep pace, in the supply of food, with the increase of population—even then they would be a great human evil. For without adding aught to the happiness of those whom they enrich, they fill the world with vice, disease, and crime, and doom the masses of mankind to a species of such excessive, unremitting, and murderous toil, as to make life a misery. Unlike the labor allotted to men by nature, (the cultivation of the soil) the labor of the factory is incompatible with his health and strength. The one improves both—the other ruins both. Can the voice of nature speak more plainly than in language such as this?

To legislate for the increase of knowledge is to legislate for more than the necessities of life—and to legislate for more than the necessities of life is to legislate for an unlimited population

—and to legislate for an unlimited population is to legislate for an *unlimited* number of mouths to be fed by a *limited* quantity of food—to destroy the necessary relation of proportion between the production of men and the production of food—between the extent of a country and the number of its inhabitants—between the extent of the globe and its productive powers, and the numerical extent of its population—and involves one of two necessities—either that the people shall become so numerous as to devour each other for want of better food, or that nature shall remedy the evil by some compensating remedy—some tremendous pestilence, or some second convulsion of the earth.

To legislate for knowledge and wealth is to legislate for the few at the expense of the many—and that too without adding an iota to the happiness either of the few or of the many. But happiness is the sole one thing needful of which all men are in pursuit. Such legislation, therefore, involves an absurdity and a contradiction.

To legislate for knowledge and wealth, too, as a means of happiness, is to legislate for that which nature has declared shall not happen—for nothing is a more universally *observed fact* than that wealth cannot produce happiness. As a means of accounting for the unwearied pursuit of wealth, although universal experience proves that it does not lead to happiness, we are told that human happiness consists in the pursuit, and not in the possession, of happiness—or, in other words, that happiness consists in a series of disappointments. Pitiful delusion! The feeling here spoken of is not happiness, but a continued unnatural excitement, like that of drinking, and ending, like habitual intoxication, always in disease, more or less destructive of health, and often—oh! how often—in premature death. Human happiness consists in contentment. For he who is contented, however poor, has all that he desires—and the very wealthiest can have no more—and he who gives him new desires only gives him additional chances of disappointment. And all healthy human pleasures consist in the gratification of healthy and useful appetites and passions—and no man can increase these, either in number or intensity, without incurring a compensating infliction of pain or disease.

It **MUST** be supposed to be a law of nature that the inhabitants of the earth shall be apportioned to the extent of its surface—otherwise you convict her of a blunder which not even *human* wisdom could commit.

He who legislates for an unlimited population, manifestly legislates in the very teeth of this law.

But every sound and efficient law, whether political or moral, must be in accordance with, and based upon, the laws of nature. For nature is stronger than man, and will ultimately have her own way; and will, moreover, and always does, punish those who oppose her course.

A limited supply of food—difficultly procurable by *healthy exertion*—an extremely limited number of wants—a scattered population—a few diseases incidental to climate, &c.—a few premature deaths from the petty and desultory warfare of man in his primitive condition—are nature's great "preventive checks," by which, as with other animals, she apportions the number of its inhabitants to the productive powers of the earth's surface.

THERE CAN BE NO SUCH THING AS EQUALITY AMONG MEN—for nature has made them *unequal*. The strong of limb and the strong of mind will always make the rest, in some way or other, contribute to the gratification of their self-love. But legislation for knowledge gives an *unnatural intensity* to this law of nature—giving an *undue degree* to this natural superiority—puts a *new instrument* into the hands of the few wherewith still further to enslave the many. For, as I have already shown, no efficient degree of knowledge can ever be acquired by the many—for to acquire knowledge requires leisure—and the many have no leisure.

Thus we see the shrewd and quick-witted few are daily everywhere enriching themselves and surrounding themselves with luxuries, to supply which gives an unhealthy stimulus to manufactures, which congregates men together, and causes them to multiply faster than the manufactures can feed them, and thus multitudes are born only to become diseased, to starve, and die, in order that the knowing few may be surrounded with luxury—which, after all, and although purchased at this great expense of human suffering, is wholly incapable of adding an iota to the real happiness of its possessors.



Physical strength may be equalized by the union of the weak against the strong. But the strength of knowledge can be equalized by no means whatever. For the knowledge of the multitude must always be greatly inferior to that of the few.

The destruction of human life by accidents alone—the accidents, I mean, which result exclusively from the arts and sciences, and discoveries of a highly cultivated people—such as those which are daily occurring by hundreds and thousands—should be sufficient to teach us that we have got into an unhealthy and unnatural condition.

Let us suppose all the highly civilized nations of the earth to be one living being—and each individual to be a *limb* of this one animal—and this one animal to be pursuing a particular path across the earth's surface. If he found that, at almost every step, he broke a leg or was lopped of a limb, which kept him in one perpetual state of bodily suffering, don't you think it would soon strike him that he must certainly have chosen the wrong path?—and that he would set about retracing his steps, and endeavour to find out one along which he might proceed without so much injury and constant suffering? Surely he would not think of attempting to remedy the evil by hurrying along the same path with redoubled energy and a quicker step! Yet this is precisely what *we* are doing!

Another FUNDAMENTAL ERROR is the absurd notion that the king, or (which is the same thing) the government of any country, is bound TO FEED the people. If it be so bound—show me the bond. If the people have any such claim—show me whence they derived it. If the government OWE any such DEBT, i. e. DUTY, to the people—show me who contracted it. Are the people a mere flock of sheep, to be driven from pasture to pasture, and fed, now with hay, now with corn, and now with turnips and cabbages, by the superintendence of a shepherd whose *property they are*? This is, indeed, debasing man, not to the level of the brute merely, but to the level of such stupid and helpless brutes as have not wit enough to feed themselves. I defy the world to show me the shadow of a proof that any government is *naturally bound*—that is, bound by any law or order of nature—that is, by any law of God—to feed the people.

But it is vain to talk to me of any *abstract* right, *abstract* justice, *abstract* humanity, *abstract* moral principle, and such other unmeaning phrases; because Lord Brougham and myself have long since agreed that Horne Tooke's doctrine of *no-abstraction* is so "*eminently natural and reasonable*" that "*all men are convinced of its truth*"—and if there be no such thing as abstraction, then it is mathematically certain that there can be no such thing as *abstract* right, *abstract* justice, *abstract* duty, or *abstract* anything else. And, barring this "convenient abstraction," as Horne Tooke calls it—this refuge for the destitute of common sense, as I call it—I say, I defy the world to show me any proof or understandable reason why the government of any country should be held bound to feed the people.

Can anything, living or dead, be bound without a bond of some kind or other?

B.

No.

A.

Can there be any such thing as debt, or duty, or something owing, without there being anything FOR WHICH that DEBT or DUTY, or something OWING, is DUE?

B.

Of course not.

A.

Can there be any right or justice, i. e. order or command, without that order or command being audible or visible, or in some way or other made recognizable and intelligible, by all parties concerned?

B.

Certainly not. But there are, you know, such things as moral obligations.

A.

To be sure there are. But let us not cajole ourselves with any hocus-pocus of *words*! The word obligation is only our English word *bond* translated into Latin—and the *two words* therefore signify but *one thing*—viz. a *withy*, or cord, or any such thing wherewith some other thing is restrained or coerced. And the phrase *moral* obligation, signifies that there is something

in the *manners and habits* of men which restrains their conduct, or coerces them to the performance or non-performance of certain actions—i. e. *which does for man's* conduct what the *withy or cord* does to whatever it encircles. It is a figure of speech, like *moral tie*, drawn from the effect which cords or withies have in holding things in their proper places, or drawing them in a particular direction. If they have not this meaning, then they cease to be intelligible words. But as there may be rights, i. e. orders and commands which it is wrong to obey—for it is frequently wrong to do right, and right to do wrong—so also there may be moral *obligations* by which it is wrong to be *obliged*, compelled, coerced. In order to prove the indisputable validity of any right, i. e. order or command, you must show me that it proceeds from nature. Otherwise I may dispute it—and if I, so may you, and if you and I, so may any other, and all other men. So, in order to prove the validity of any moral obligation or bond, you must show me that that bond or obligation is thrown around us by nature—otherwise it also may be disputed and thrown off. And in order to prove to me that it is my *duty* to obey an order or command—or to suffer myself to be coerced by any bond, it is first necessary to show me both the order and the bond, and then *also to show me* why it is my duty to obey the order, and to be coerced by the bond—why it is my duty—that is, how I came to *owe this debt* (of obedience) which is said to be *DUE* from me? *to whom* I owe it? and for what?

I have already said that the two great duties of man are, one which he *owes* to himself, and one which he *owes* to his offspring. But how comes he to owe these debts? *For what* does he owe them? Why is he compelled by nature to pay them? What is their end? their object? The answer is plain enough. All human duties, as well as brute duties, and even, if I may so speak, the duties of stocks and stones, by which I mean the laws which govern their existence, are subservient to the one, grand, sole duty or debt which is *DUE* to the accomplishment of the Creator's great design, the preservation of the universe, in all essentials, whole and entire, unchanged for ever—or at least, unchanged so long as it continues to be governed by the same



laws. And the conservation of the universe entire is the payment—the return—the **THAT FOR WHICH** the *debt* or *duty* is *owing*—the quid pro quo—the something to be gained. But how do I know that this is the Creator's design? Precisely as I know, get, gain, or gather, every other fact whatever. I look abroad and see that *it is so*—I am compelled to believe that it *has been so* for thousands of years—and my experience, and the experience of all men in all ages, of the operation of nature's laws, prove to me that it must continue to be so. I see the *fact accomplished*, and reasoning from effects to causes, I cannot help believing that the *accomplished* fact is a *designed* or *predetermined* fact.

But how do I know that all earthly duties, whether of man, brute, or of the inorganic kingdom, are instituted with the design of accomplishing this fact, or scheme, or purpose of the Creator? Here again, as in every other instance, I **KNOW** the fact, because I **SEE** the fact. I look abroad—through the air—through the earth—through the ocean—and, as far as human ingenuity can carry human observation, through the illimitable regions of the planets—and everywhere I see every atom of matter, living and dead busily engaged night and day, in bringing about this *one great object*. And I say that this is their object, because I see that this is the object which is constantly *obtained*; and because I can easily trace the steps, step by step, which everywhere *lead* to this object; and because I can easily see that this object could not be otherwise obtained, as the universe is constituted; and because I can see that to annul *all* these duties, laws, or rights, would necessarily break up *all* the universe, and that to annul a *part* of them is to break up a *part* of the universe—and finally, because I can see no **OTHER** object. Not but that there may be other objects far removed beyond the reach of human reason. But then human reason is all that man has to guide him in all matters of human philosophy—and human reason is human experience—and therefore human philosophy is human experience also. And there clearly can be no human experience, and no human reasoning, concerning things which are beyond the reach, and out of the sphere, of human experience and reason. Whatever

*other* ultimate object there may be, therefore, we can have nothing to do with it, nor can it ever enter into, or have any influence over, the affairs of man—at least while he remains a habitant of earth.

All the laws of nature are CONSERVATIVE LAWS—even the very laws which regulate the *changes* constantly going on in the *parts* are nevertheless conservative of the *whole*. Even *death* is conservative of *life*.

Whenever, therefore, you point to any human duty, or moral obligation, call it how you will, you must show me that the payment of that duty, or the fulfilment of that obligation, is *necessary* to the conservation of the human species—that species of existences being a necessary and predetermined part of the whole. If you cannot do this, then where is your authority for calling it a duty, debt, or moral bond? Where is the THAT FOR WHICH this debt or duty is to be paid? and who or what is the claimant? And what is the object to be achieved or purchased by the payment of this duty? For I have already shown you that all duties—not even excepting religious duties—are rendered on the principle of a *quid pro quo*—a reward—a re-payment—a something to be gained. “Blessed is he that considereth the poor.” Why? The sacred poet proceeds to tell you—“the Lord will *deliver him in time of trouble*.” Psalm xli. 1.

“He that hath pity unto the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he PAY HIM AGAIN.” Prov. xix. 17.

“If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; THEN shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day. And the Lord shall satisfy thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in *drought*, and *make fat thy bones*; and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not.” Isaiah lviii. 10, 11.

B.

Is there no duty which we owe to feeling?

A.

The duty we owe to feeling is identical with the duty we owe to self-love—which teaches us to avoid pain and to seek pleasure.

But human feelings are as variable as human opinions—and can never, therefore, be made the foundation of a general law which is to *bind all*.

But while *you* can show *me* no earthly reason why the king should feel himself bound to feed the people, *I* can show *you* very sufficient reasons why he should NOT. In the first place, he CAN'T—in the next place, any law which should bind any one man, or one dozen or so of men, to take care of the interests of several millions of other men, is directly at variance with the most stringent, and unmistakeable of all nature's laws, which has decreed that every man shall TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF.

It is a *human* scheme directly opposed to the *divine* scheme. This is one of those human IMPROVEMENTS on the divine laws, at which man in his madness is not ashamed to attempt. The king has nothing to do with the people but to protect them from foreign invasion, and he does this in order to preserve his own kingly dignity, honors, and powers, and not from any love he bears to the people—and to arbitrate between them in cases of dispute and personal offences, and he does this that he may maintain an authority among them, and have the honor of reigning over a well-ordered and respectable people capable of defending his throne, and not over a disorderly rabble. And the king, in return for these services, *exacts* from the people a certain amount of honors, wealth, privileges, and distinctions, enjoyed by no other man. And the people pay him this tribute only because they either *cannot* help it, or because they think it more to their interests to pay it, than to involve the kingdom in turmoil by resisting it.

I observe in one of our leading weekly literary papers, dated the ninth of the present month (October), the following: "the conduct of a nation is but the conduct of a family on a large scale." But this is a fundamental error. For the strong law of *parental affection* enters largely into the motives which regulate the conduct of a family. There is no such law existing between king and people.

## B.

What have you to say to moral or political principle.



## A.

The first thing I have to say with regard to this and every other proposition is, to inquire the meaning of the words wherein the statement is made. The word *principle* is a Latin word and signifies the beginning ; and is applied to signify the *first moving cause* in any machinery whether moral or mechanical—the beginning of motion. Thus the principle of the steam-engine is the expansibility of steam, or production of a vacuum, or whatever may be considered as the *first moving cause or power* which sets the machinery in motion. Moral principle signifies the first cause which sets in motion the conduct of man—whether it be political or civil conduct—and this first moving cause is self-love.

If the word principle have not this meaning, then it ceases to be an intelligible word, and cannot be admitted into any process of reasoning, unless the reasoner substitute for it some other word which *has* an intelligible meaning.

But to return.

I say there is *no bond*, of any kind, existing between the king and people, but the bonds of power on one side, and self-interest on both.

Some centuries ago William the Norman took the kingdom from Harold the Dane. So much the worse for Harold the Dane—and so much the better for William the Norman.

William's conduct, in this, was governed by his self-love, and he owed its gratification—that is, his success—to that law which orders the strong everywhere to rule over the weak.

The Saxons were oppressed, and the broad lands of England were parcelled out among William's Norman followers. So much the worse for the Saxons—so much the better for the Normans. To the Saxons it was a great evil—to the Normans a great good.

So when the fly, floating in joyous existence over the bright surface of the sunny waters, finds himself, on a sudden, passing down the throat of the little fish, he thinks his case a hard one. The little fish thinks otherwise. To the fly, the case is a hard one—to the fish, a pleasant and necessary one.

Presently, the little fish finds himself swimming through the

jaws of the shark. The little fish thinks his case a hard one—the shark thinks otherwise. By and by the shark finds himself floundering in the belly of the whale. The shark thinks his case a hard one—the whale thinks otherwise. Anon, the whale is spouting blood by barrels, transfixed by the harpoons of the Greenland fisherman. The whale thinks his case a hard one—the fisherman thinks otherwise. Time wears on—the fisherman has made a fortune by his whales—he comes to England, buys an estate, and sits down to enjoy the rest of his life beneath the shadow of his own vine and fig-tree.

Presently, the fisherman is called upon to fight in defence of his house and home. But the foreign invader against whom he is called upon to fight, proves the stronger. He conquers the country, turns the fisherman adrift, and gives his estate to a follower of his own. It is now the fisherman's turn to complain—and he, who never thought of the hard case of the whales which he slew in order that he might not only live, but enjoy at least a portion of his life in luxurious ease, thinks his case a hard one. The new proprietor of his estate thinks otherwise. The misfortune of the one is the fortune of the other. The estate had a proprietor before—it has a proprietor now. It matters not one straw to nature *which of those two men* is the proprietor of that estate. She did not give it to this man or to that man. She gave it to the strongest man—to him who could win it and keep it. Is not every one in the world of those large estates, called kingdoms, held, at this moment, on the same tenure? And do you think nature made one law for large estates and another for small ones? No—her laws are all general—not particular. Let who will be the proprietor, her machinery goes on, all the same, and accomplishes her design.

Englishmen think they have a right to the soil of England. They have only a right to it as long as they can keep it. Had Napoleon conquered us at Waterloo, then Frenchmen would have thought *they* had a right to it. And in a century or two would have been as much surprised to hear that right disputed as Englishmen would be now. But it does not matter a tittle to nature whether the soil called England shall be inhabited by Englishmen or Frenchmen. Had Napoleon won the battle at

Waterloo, and taken possession of this country, his right to it, as long as he could keep it, would have been as unquestionable as ours at this moment. Ours is the right of conquest and possession. *His* would *then* have been the same—until, in his turn, another stronger than he should expel him.

Man stands at the top of the animal ladder. There are no beings above him, to gratify their self-love, and preserve their own existence, at his expense. There are none to kill and eat him.

But man himself is divided into numberless classes, each stronger than the other, and each having a self-love to be gratified. And here the same law holds—the law that superior might shall gratify its self-love at the expense of the weaker—and the weaker at the expense of the weaker still.

There is not one law for man, and another for little fishes.

It is a law of nature that the large fish shall prey upon the smaller, and man upon both great and small. But we only know this to be a law of nature, because we open our eyes and see that it is so. It is also a law of nature that the strong man shall gratify his self-love at the expense of the weak one—whether that weak one be a man or a fish. And the philosopher knows this to be a law of nature for the same reason that he knows the other to be a law of nature—viz. because he opens his eyes and sees that, everywhere, it is so. The only difference between the philosopher and mankind generally, is, that the philosopher's eyes are *always open*—whereas the eyes of mankind are *shut*, the moment anything presents itself which is disagreeable to feeling, education, and habit.

But to return to the Norman William.

The Saxons, in time, forgot their fancied wrongs—and men did then, just what they do now. That is to say, those toiled for bread who could not get bread without toil. Those who *could*, enjoyed their leisure as best suited their fancy. And those who could not get bread at all (if there were any such) were starved and died. These latter were very miserable, as starving men always will be. They said then, as they say now, that their case, like that of the little fishes, was a very hard one—and so it was—for *them*. All the others, however, (the great



bulk) were happy enough. Not that they did not sometimes grumble and growl—for men will always grumble when they want what they can't get. But, then, as their wants were very few and simple, the chances of disappointment were *few also*—and therefore the grumbling *seldom*—I mean of the great body. It is true, they did not wear black coats—but then they did not *wish* for black coats. They did not use chimneys to their houses—but then they did not *mind the smoke*. They did not read books—but then they did not *wish* to read books. They did not understand the arts and sciences—but then they did not desire to understand the arts and sciences. They had no intellectual gratifications—but then they had no intellectual wants. They were unpolished, uncultivated, and ungenteel in their manners—but then they did not wish to be polished. They were wholly destitute of that multitudinous host of luxuries called comforts—but then they did not desire to possess them. In short, they only desired to be happy—and they *were* happy. They led a lazy, idle life—a life of carelessness and thoughtlessness—just precisely that sort of life which the fisherman killed whales in order to enable himself to lead—and to be able to lead which, we are all of us tearing and working the very hearts out of our bodies. “They managed these things better” in those days. The very swine-herd was a gentleman—not in dress—not in manners—not in rank—but in the fact of his having little or nothing to do, but to eat, drink, and be merry.

It is true, there was some rapine in those days, and some robbery, amongst even the nobles of the land. These things are now chiefly confined to the poor alone, and go by different names.

The highways were infested with thieves, and the solitary traveller was almost sure to have either his purse or his throat cut. But then there were but few travellers in those days, scarcely any but the wealthy, and they travelled with an escort, or a safe-conduct. So that highway robbery was anything but a lucrative trade after all.

A man might murder his neighbour and satisfy justice by payment of a fine. Horrible! cry you. True—but then people were not strung upon the gallows by the dozen for

forgery, as they were here a few years ago. Nor were they blown out of the world by hundreds, at a time, by the bursting of steam-boat boilers—nor crushed under the wheels of railroad carriages—nor crippled and dwarfed by excessive labor in factories—nor sent out of the world by hundreds of thousands by disease—nor driven mad by disappointment and vexation. Nor did they cut their own throats, or otherwise destroy themselves, at the rate of nearly three thousand every year, as they do now in France. They loved life too well in those days. But we—the enlightened of the earth—we, who have prosecuted the march of intellect so successfully—we, the educated and elevated—we, I say, have made great improvements in these latter days—we scorn to cut the throats of other people, and will not suffer other people to cut ours—no—we cut our *own* throats now—at the rate of between two and three thousand every year. For we have discovered that it makes a wonderful difference to the interests of humanity whether a man cut his own throat or have it cut by another.

Oh yes! There was plenty of suffering even in those days, but not by one-twentieth so much as in these enlightened days of ours.

B.

But it is said that the evils existing now (most of them) do so, because we are not yet refined and cultivated *enough*.

A.

I know this is the *assertion* of a few perfectionists, with whom it is not worth while to reason, because reason is a matter with which they never trouble themselves. It is not worth while to reason with men whose conclusions are drawn from no premises—whose arguments are mere assertions ushered in with an “*I think*,” or “*I believe*,” or “*I am certain*”—and who, if you ask them for a reason for their assertions, will reply with a “*because I am certain*,” or “*because I believe*,” or “*because I think*.”

I have said that faith is as necessary in politics as in religion. Let any people BELIEVE themselves happy, and that people ARE happy—provided they be as free from actual bodily pain as is compatible with man’s nature, and the nature of that relation which exists between himself and the things wherewith he is

surrounded. But the moment they fancy there is something withheld from them which they ought to possess, they become discontented. Happiness is compatible with every condition short of bodily pain. Both barbarian and semi-barbarian are happy because they *believe* they possess all that is necessary to their happiness. The misery and dissatisfaction of the masses, in a highly cultivated country, arise from their having been taught to believe that they have NOT all that is necessary to make man happy—that they might have *more* if their rulers did not withhold it from them.

B.

But this is the happiness of brutes merely.

A.

Brutes ! my dear Sir, do you never eat potatoes ?

B.

Yes—a great many.

A.

From this day forth you will never touch another—for I know you to be a *reasonable* man. Let me whisper in your ear—potatoes, Sir, are the very food upon which my uncle, the farmer, *fattens his hogs*. But keep this a secret, I pray. For if it were known that potatoes are mere food for hogs, what man would be so unreasonable as to eat them, or desire the poor to do so ?

Well—William the Conqueror took the kingdom by physical force, and distributed most of its lands, excepting such portions of it as he chose to keep for his own royal amusement of hunting, amongst his followers. He also imposed what laws he chose upon the people. In all this you observe nothing but the exercise of *power* and self-interest.

Now I say that, up to the present moment, this same power—this right of might—is the only bond which exists between any king, potentate, or government whatever, and the people—and that you cannot demonstrate to me any other—and therefore cannot, of course, show me any bond, or natural obligation, binding kings to feed the people.

Any one whose eyes are not jaundiced, will perceive that the great political struggle which has been for years going on in



England, is merely a struggle between the power of knowledge and that old-fashioned power called physical. It is merely a struggle on the part of new men, lately advanced to wealth and station, by the advancement of knowledge, to dispossess those whose title to distinction, and to places of great political trust, was originally acquired by physical force. The struggle is entirely between these—and the interests of the people form no part of the *motives* of that struggle. But, as either party, in order to succeed in the contest, must have the assistance of the people, the government being elective, it is necessary to conciliate the favor of the people. And, in order to do this, each party endeavours to convince them that their interests will be best served by electing *THEM* for their governors and legislators. Thus the interests of the people are not the *object* of the struggle, but merely a collateral contingency arising out of it. And, *de facto*, the conservatives, the whigs, and the people, are three distinct parties, each intent upon its own interests, and on profiting by circumstances.

Both parties being compelled to appeal to the people for assistance—the conservative says: “let me retain my post of honor—I am wealthy and have nothing else to do—and am willing to undergo the trouble for the sake of the distinction. I will, however, make you no false promises. I cannot make you all gentlemen—nor all wealthy—nor all wise. Nor can I surround you all with what those who possess them call the comforts of life. But this is of little consequence, since none of these things are at all necessary to human happiness, excepting where a taste for them has been acquired from habit.

If any among you are desirous and have ingenuity enough to earn these little luxuries—let him do so—and enjoy them as he pleases. I consider individual education and learning as one of these luxuries. If any be desirous of purchasing it, let him do so, if he can, by all means. But as I will make no laws to compel men, or bribe, or otherwise induce them, against their inclination, to acquire *any* of the luxuries of life—so neither will I make laws, or hold out premiums, or resort to any other means, for the purpose of compelling, or persuading, or stimulating men to the acquirement of this one luxury any more than

another. If any man feel that he cannot be happy without the luxury of a carriage, let him try to earn one. If another feel that he cannot be happy without a handsome house, and a servant or two to wait upon him, let him get them by all means, if he can. And if any feel that he cannot be happy without books, and the leisure and ability to read them, let him get them, if he can. I repeat that I consider education to be no more than one of the luxuries of life—or a trade, which if any wish to practice, let him put himself apprentice to it. I cannot alter human nature—nor the laws of the universe. I cannot weed out from among you all physical suffering. Nature herself is, in fact, your true governor. I look upon you as a hive of bees, and I consider the duty of your rulers to consist chiefly in standing by, and protecting your hives, and your honey, and yourselves from the invasion of enemies—in keeping all interlopers out of your garden—and, if you quarrel among yourselves and appeal to me, I will settle the dispute in the best manner I am able. But as to the best mode of constructing your cells, and manufacturing your honey—all *that* belongs to your own private interests—and is no business of mine—both you, and your interests, and your labors, are all under the governance of certain laws of your nature, with which I dare not attempt to interfere—because I am sure her laws are wiser than any I could give you, and that your interests will be best taken care of if left to the dominion of these laws. No man is so well able to take care of another's interest as that other himself. I leave your own interests, therefore, to your own management—convinced that in doing so, I consult your happiness more effectually than by attempting to lift you beyond the operations of nature's laws, in order to place you under a fallible code of my own.

All that belongs to the procuration of food must be left wholly to yourselves. Nature has made some of you larger and stronger than others. These will make most honey, and be better off than the others. Some will be able (although extremely few) to make no honey at all—and will starve and die. It is a pitiful sight to a man of feeling to see this happen. But a man of sense, reason, and reflection, who has studied the

nature of bees, and the laws of the universe, knows and sees that nature *will have it so*—and that any attempt to thwart her *will* can only result in still *greater suffering*—and I think you will allow that your lawgivers, be they who they may, ought to be guided by sense and reason, and not impelled by feeling.”

Then—up jumps the whig improver, and says: “fellow countrymen! Listen not for a moment to the cold-blooded language of that blood-thirsty ruffian! It curdles the milk of human kindness to cheese within my bosom, to hear you likened to a parcel of paltry bees! Are you not all men?—endowed with all the dignity of man’s intellectual nature? Give the post of honor to *me*, and I will do such things for you! I will so elevate you in the scale of creation, that your place shall be only ‘a little lower than the angels.’ Every man shall have a cosy little cottage to himself—there shall be no such thing in the kingdom as starvation, or oppression, or crime, or vice, or physical suffering of any kind—at least worth mentioning. All men shall be learned, and wise and good, and be compelled to work only just enough to keep them in health. No man shall be selfish—but every man shall live chiefly for the benefit of his neighbour. All men shall be well-mannered and well-dressed—and ignorance and vulgarity, and all rude and boisterous mirth shall be an abomination in their sight. I am afraid, gentlemen, that I shall be obliged to leave you to eat and drink and multiply your kind after nature’s vulgar fashion still—which is, I blush and grieve to say, after the fashion of the beasts of the field. Gentlemen! this is very humiliating—but, I fear, cannot be helped. In all other respects, however, I will remove you out of the reach of nature’s laws. You shall no longer be happy and contented after the manner of brute-beasts, but shall enjoy an intellectual happiness worthy of your god-like nature.” He then proposes a law, with a view to these objects, to which the conservative will not consent, knowing that these objects are perfectly chimerical. The conservative gives his reasons against the law, the whig reiterates his in favor of the law. The speeches, it is true, are not made *to* the people, but *at* them. And the reasons of each are, *de facto*, only so



many reasons put forth to prove to the people that it is to their interest that they should allow him to fill the post of honor. "You *ought* to let me fill the post," says the conservative, "*because* my mode of government is most likely to make you happy"—and he gives reasons for this opinion. The whig says: "you *ought* to let *me* fill the post, *because* my government would be more to your interests"—and then he gives *his* reasons for *his* opinion. It matters not whether the speeches be made on any particular measure, or on general policy. They all amount to this: "I want the post of honor." In all this there is nothing but a struggle of power against power, and to which ever party the people lend their assistance, they do so with the sole view of serving their own interests—and the whole matter is a matter of self-interest and nothing else. And no other natural bond or obligation of any kind is discoverable.

And the people, having made themselves acquainted with the general policy of both parties, have only to consider which is best calculated to promote their own happiness.

However imperfect the conservative policy may be, and has been, in some particular instances, it is now mainly based upon one broad principle—and that principle is a sound one, because it is in conformity with the laws of nature and common sense—I mean the principle of non-progression, or things as they are. Many of the conservatives were themselves deluded and joined the outcry for education. They now see their error—they see that the march of intellect is, *de facto*, a rapid march towards an excessive population and human misery—and have wisely determined upon the only means which can now be opposed to it—the obstruction of a *vis inertię*.

The whigs legislate either upon no principle at all, or upon one which is directly opposed to the laws of human nature, and to the relation which exists between man and the circumstances wherewith he is surrounded—one of which is clearly the relation of proportion which must exist between human numbers and the extent of the earth's surface.

Were the earth no larger than the continent of America, instead of being about thrice as large, the force of this argument would be acknowledged at once. But because the evils of a

universal excessive population are as yet remote, it is overlooked. Had the state of knowledge been, a few thousand years ago, what it is now, the evil of a universal excessive population had already reached us. But I say that any universal principle of action which would have been wrong three thousand years ago, or which will be wrong three thousand years to come, is **WRONG** now. That principle must be wrong which has a *necessary tendency* to people the earth whose surface is *limited*, with a population whose numbers are *unlimited*—or which shall make it necessary for nature to interfere with some devastating remedy.

When the earth shall be peopled with the descendants of the superior tribes of men alone, one or other of these evils will not be far remote. It is the character of the whig government (under which title I include the whole tribe of improvers or reformers) to legislate for particular instances—for the distress of particular classes—the result of which is an almost universal clashing of interests. How different is this from that which man must always take for his guide and standard, in all his affairs, if he would manage them wisely—I mean the wisdom of nature—a wisdom which never changes, but is wise *once and for ever*. It is as though nature, when she beheld the open-mouthed shark plunging into a shoal of little fishes, should instantly enact a law to relieve the little fishes from so crying an evil.

If there be any principle at all in whig legislation, it is the principle of what they call improvement—the advancement of the arts, the multiplication of manufactures and manufacturing powers—additional comfort, and abundance of food for all classes—increased facilities of internal commerce—increase of wealth—increase of labor—increase in the number and kind of human wants—and, therefore, increase in the number and kind of human necessities—and, therefore, increase in the difficulty of procuring them, &c., &c.

But this principle is not only not in accordance with the legislation of nature, but has a direct tendency greatly to disturb, more or less, the whole of her laws—and to defeat its own object. For the immediate effect of this principle is to multiply the people in a degree out of all proportion to the good obtained.

It converts half the kingdom into a hot-house for *forcing the growth* of the population. While it saves *one family* from starving to-day, it entails starvation upon two or three in the next generation. While it makes a few wealthy, it makes the great body poor.

Formerly we had one aristocracy and one body of poor—now we have another aristocracy—the aristocracy of commercial wealth—and *another body of poor* called into existence *by it*.

To legislate for wealth is to legislate for poverty.

To legislate for abundance of food and work is to legislate for misery and starvation.

To legislate for more than the necessities of life, in the shape of those little *luxuries* called *comforts*, and which, from habit, become *necessaries*, is to legislate for an *excessive population*, and human misery in every shape.

Another fundamental error in whig legislation is, that it yields to the cry of pity—and legislates for *feeling*, forgetting that to gratify compassion for one instance of distress, they probably entail the same distress in hundreds of others.

This system of legislation has already greatly disturbed one of nature's most stringent laws—parental affection and love of offspring. Men, straining to keep up what is called a respectable standing in society, with means barely sufficient to do so, feel their families a *burthen upon them*. Pride will not suffer them to make hedgers and ditchers of their sons, and servants of their daughters; and yet they have not the means of making them anything better. From this arises a numerous overtaken class of perfect slaves—I mean milliners and dress-makers, and school governesses, and shop women, and tradesmen's journey-men, and professional men without practice. The lives of these are a hundred times more laborious than those of the farmer's labourer. But they *must* wear black coats, and smart dresses—they must make a respectable APPEARANCE—and for this they will submit to any drudgery.

If you ask a man, now-a-days, if he have any children, the answer generally is: “no—thank God”—instead of, “bless God, I have.”

It is not now, as formerly, “happy is the man who has his quiver full of them.”



So great is the evil of excessive population felt to be, that the monstrous and unnatural operation of "painless extinction" has even been proposed as a remedy. Yes—it has been gravely proposed (I give this on the authority of the Rev. Baptist Noel's pamphlet against the corn laws) that all the children of the poor, after the third, should be destroyed before birth.

The Hon. and Rev. Baptist W. Noel has written a pamphlet against the corn laws. If it be praiseworthy to have a feeling heart, the Rev. Baptist Noel is a praiseworthy man. But that is a *false humanity* which cures one man of the palsy, and infects, by the remedy, two of his grand-children with the leprosy. If the corn laws were abolished, the author says it is astonishing how much the "COMFORTS" of the poor would be increased. Had the author *felt less* and *reasoned more*, he would have discovered that this same legislation for "*comforts*" is one of the main causes of the distress which he seeks to alleviate. If it were certain that the abolition of the corn laws would produce all the immediate results which the author anticipates, it would nevertheless be unsound policy to abolish them.

Much distress must be endured *now*, that a tenfold distress may be avoided in the years that are *to come*.

B.

But how is it that we have got into this anomalous condition?

A.

Oh! it is by virtue of one of the old laws—one of nature's laws—which, however much they may be *disturbed*, can never be abolished. We are now beginning to undergo the punishment for having DISTURBED the law which ordains that SUPERIOR MIGHT shall gratify its self-love at the expense of weakness. The natural law is, that this *superior might* shall be (*chiefly*) physical.

In order to ascertain any *natural* law with regard to man, you must observe man in a *state of nature*. And in this condition it is *physical strength* which elevates one man above his fellow.

In the *physical contest* for power—in the petty warfare of primitive tribe against tribe—there is a certain amount of loss of life. This is what men call an evil. But it is an evil of nature's own ordination. It is one of the means to which she resorts in

order to maintain the due proportion between the amount of the earth's population, and the productive power of its surface to supply its population with food.

With the inferior animals, the stronger prey upon the weaker for food. Man has no superior animal to prey upon him for food. It was necessary, therefore, that man should war against man in order to avoid that excess of multiplication which, with the lower animals, is guarded against by making the stronger prey upon the weaker for food.

Men have sought to abolish this law—and, in so doing, have aggravated the evil ten thousand-fold. For who will deny that the number of deaths in any highly cultivated community is not incalculably greater than in any primitive community, both absolutely, and relatively, to their numbers? Recollect that, in the civilized world, *two-thirds of mankind perish before their thirty-ninth year!*

The spread of knowledge has introduced a new power, which, while it multiplies human deaths and miseries a thousand-fold, nevertheless, multiplies *births* with a still greater rapidity.

That man was intended by nature to be “a field animal,” as Dr. Blundel calls him, and not a manufacturing animal, is sufficiently proved to the contemplative man by the fact that, while agricultural labor contributes to health and strength, the labors of the factory necessarily and invariably injure both. I say, this *alone*, to a contemplative mind, would be proof sufficient against the multiplication of factories.

When men discovered a new and rapid means of propagating and increasing knowledge, they fancied they had discovered a means of abolishing nature's law that the strong shall oppress the weak. Whereas they had only discovered a *new means* of effecting the *same object*—and of placing the power to oppress *in different hands*. They have only withdrawn the power to oppress from a superior organization of bone and muscle, and transferred it to a superior organization of brain.

Thus nature's genuine law has been disturbed to gratify the self-love of the *strong-brained* few, *instead of the strong-limbed* few, and the *weak-brained* many and the *strong-limbed* many are now suffering the consequences of this disturbed law.

To multiply laws is to multiply crime, since the great majority of crimes are breaches, not of the natural, i. e. the divine, but of *human* laws—and are, therefore, offences against *man merely*, and not against God. But all crimes must be punished. To multiply laws, therefore, is to multiply human punishments, i. e. human miseries.

Thus the law between debtor and creditor is an unnecessary law, and one productive of infinite misery. Nature had already provided a law between debtor and creditor—the law of self-love—which here takes the name of self-aggrandisement.

B.

But if there were no law between debtor and creditor, what would become of our great commercial interests?

A.

Ay—there it is. You would legislate for commercial wealth—I for popular happiness—that is, happiness to the greatest number. Had there been no law between debtor and creditor, it is true that we should have been a less wealthy, but a far happier people. We should have been a less *numerous* people, a less *overtasked* people, a less cultivated and less refined people, a more ill-dressed and more ill-mannered people, a less manufacturing people, a more agricultural people, a less diseased, a less suicidal, a less maimed, crippled, and mutilated people—A MORE CONTENTED PEOPLE.

The laws between debtor and creditor have begotten a false confidence—a false confidence has begotten a false credit—a false credit has begotten a false and bloated bubble of a trade which, for every *one* which it enriches, ruins a hundred, and entails upon them the miseries of disappointed hope and degraded pride. They have begotten a false wealth to the many, as well as a real wealth to the few—false tastes, false desires, false necessities, false pride, false notions of respectability, false hopes, false crimes, false punishments, false notions of happiness, and nothing real, but human misery.

Were there no laws between debtor and creditor, it is perfectly true that there would be *no commercial aristocracy*—but then there would be a greater number of *happy*, because a greater number of *solvent*, tradesmen—while there could not be any such thing in the kingdom as an insolvent tradesman.



It is also perfectly true that there would be much less work for the poor. But then there would be a much smaller number of hands to perform it.

It is a fundamental error, because directly opposed to the fundamental laws of nature, to suppose that a people cannot be too well fed, clothed, lodged, or surrounded with too many 'comforts.'

It is a fundamental error, because opposed to the fundamental laws of nature, to suppose that there is any other natural relation or bond between the governing body, and the body governed, than that of self-interest.

It is a fundamental error, because opposed to the fundamental laws of nature, to suppose that there is any other relation or bond between man and man (excepting parental affection) than self-interest.

The Rev. Baptist Noel says: "a distinguished opponent of the repeal of the present corn laws, after describing the present sufferings of the manufacturers, their *lowered* wages, and their *increasing* number, adds: 'I confess it is frightful to contemplate such a state of things and of society, but it can no longer be concealed; and yet the only remedy seems to be to diminish their sources of employment, in order to produce future or permanent good.'"

This "distinguished writer"—not the Rev. Baptist Noel, but the writer whom he quotes—has hit the right nail on the head.

Now in what manner does the Rev. Baptist Noel answer this distinguished writer? Does he argue the question with him? Does he examine the validity or invalidity of his statement? Not a bit of it. He proceeds thus: "inadequate employment has stripped their dwellings bare, driven them to dark cellars, loaded the pawn-brokers' shops, &c." Mere declamation! Well! granted. But what then? Does not the Rev. Baptist Noel perceive that the true question is, *not* what has "stripped their dwellings bare"—for all the world know very well that their dwellings have been "*stripped*" by inadequate employment—but the true question is, what is the *cause* of that *inadequate employment*? To which the plain answer is, a redundant population. Then comes the question: "what is the cause of the redundant population?" To which I answer: "that false

legislation which has given an undue, unnatural, and *forcing stimulus* to the multiplication of men by legislating for wealth and luxury, and for the growth of those population hot-houses, the manufacturing towns. In a word, legislation for the *improvement* of human kind, and the increase and dissemination of human knowledge and human inventions, which have given rise to that false and over-populating power—the power of mechanical machinery—a power which feeds a starving few to-day, that twice their number may be starved a few years hence.

We are now beginning to reap the evils of having provided too well for the poor—of having legislated for their “comforts” instead of for the necessities of life. The Rev. Baptist Noel would *remedy* the evil by giving an additional fillip to its *cause*. A little further on he repudiates the remedy of this distinguished writer, because it is “cruel.” Heard ever anybody the like of such argument as this! What! So I must not have my leg amputated in order to save my life, or my whole body from suffering, because amputation is a cruel and painful operation! This comes of allowing a morbid sensibility to supersede reason and common sense. Does he not admit the principle that the few must suffer for the many? that the smaller evil must be endured in order to avoid the greater? If not, then he must be an advocate for the still farther diminution of the employment of the poor by the abolition of rail-ways and steam-boats. For since these are only encouraged by government on the ground that they are for the public good, nothing can be clearer than that all those persons who have lost their lives by rail-way and steam-boat accidents are victims sacrificed to the public good. For any machinery which produced such wholesale destruction of human life *would not be suffered* if it were only to secure a private and individual advantage. Thus, when Mr. Cocking lost his life by ascending in a parachute, the magistrates interfered to prevent others from doing the like. And yet it is pretended that there are no human sacrifices in these enlightened days!

#### B.

But the travelling by rail-ways and steam-boats is a voluntary act—and the risk a voluntary risk.

## A.

Out upon such bare-faced equivocation ! Is not the act of the Hindu, who throws himself beneath the wheels of Juggernaut's car, a voluntary act ? Was not Mr. Cocking's a voluntary act ? Why is the voluntary death of the Hindu to be called a human sacrifice, and the voluntary death of the rail-way traveller *not so* ? Nothing can be clearer than that those who die by steam accidents are human sacrifices to the public good—just as much so as those human victims sacrificed by the Druids to propitiate their gods for the public welfare.

I have not sought these reflections. They have come to me unsought and unbidden—arising as *necessary corollaries* out of my general reasonings, in the course of my professional studies, on the laws of the universe, and especially with regard to those laws which relate to the nature of man.

The spread of education and knowledge set the people *a thinking and reasoning*, and lost Rome her church—at least in England. Is there no danger lest it lose us *ours* ? Is there nothing in our church, reformed as it is, but what is substantially and really necessary to the true and heartfelt worship of God ? Is there nothing in her forms and ceremonies and government at which superficial thinkers may carp ? Have they not already begun to pick the mortar from her wells—to take away here a buttress and there a buttress—here a stone and there a stone—saying : “the building will stand firm enough without this, and this, and this ?” But I say, if you would save the structure from utter ruin, not a chip should be stricken from a single stone in her walls. For however minute the chip so stricken off, it surely though imperceptibly weakens the fabric.

It is far better to believe *too much* than *too little*. And if we once turn utilitarians, and determine to sweep away everything which has not a direct and manifest utility—everything which savours of mummery and imposture—the broom must be carried clean through every grade of society from top to bottom.

What are the forms and ceremonies of the law, and the absurd and inconvenient dresses of the judges and barristers, but most manifest mummery ? But would it be well to abolish these ? Surely not—for they excite more reverence for the law



than anything inherent *in the law itself*; and it is necessary that this reverence should exist—and the *manner how* that necessary reverence is obtained is of little consequence.

I am no stickler for particular creeds—but I observe, through all the tribes of men, that a religious creed, of some sort or other, exists. Therefore I conclude that nature deemed it necessary. And I can easily perceive how it contributes to the happiness and well-being of men, even here upon earth. But the spread of education threatens to leave us—us—the enlightened of the world—without any religious creed at all.

The condition of the masses is one of inevitable toil and what the rich call hardship. If there were no other objection to the spread of a superficial education among them, (and it is impossible to give them more) it would be a sufficiently substantial objection, that it makes them discontented with their lot in life, envious of, and spiteful against, those whom fortune has more favored, and induces them to repudiate the happiness within their reach, and to fret away their lives in anxious, and painful, and struggling, but fruitless efforts to escape from a fate which, to the great multitude is, of course, inevitable.

B.

Have you no remedy to offer for the many evils which afflict society at the present moment?

A.

I am no nostrum-monger—but I observe, everywhere, that particular evils will cure themselves when the cause which produced them ceases to operate—though at the expense of much inevitable human suffering.

The fundamental cause of all is the insane cry for human *improvement*, for an impossible perfection, for human *elevation*, human *invention*, increase of wealth, increase of manufactures, increase of knowledge, increase of machinery, increase of trade—because all these are so many unnatural stimuli given to the increase of population. Let the *vis inertiae* of government be opposed to these, and, in time, the ship will right herself.

Let there be no more acts of parliaments passed to compel men to sell their lands, and their houses, and their ancestral patrimonies, in order to enable a company to enrich themselves

by erecting railways, and digging canals, and such like things, under pretence of their being public permanent benefits. They are not permanent public benefits—but temporary benefits and permanent evils. If a number of men want a quantity of land on which to build a railway, let them make the best bargain they can with the proprietors. Leave men to take care of their own interests—leave human nature to the operation of its own laws—and the public good will be consulted more efficiently than by any human contrivances.

Of course, all *compulsory* retrogressive measures are out of the question. The *vis inertiae* of government will be sufficient.

While nothing more stable and consistent than human opinion is made the basis of legislation, legislation must ever be *unstable and inconsistent*.

I wrote to three intelligent friends, all of them whigs, and requested them to picture to me that condition of society which they desired to see established.

The first replies to me thus. Read his letter.

B.

“This is the state that society should endeavour to attain. The agrarian law, or the fee simple of the empire, to be the property of every soul living in it, on the basis of equality. By this I mean, the rental of all the buildings on the soil as well as of the soil itself. Out of this provide for the expenses of the government, and then divide the remainder. No person to be allowed to alienate this his birthright, even for a day. No law faith. No other distinctions among men than official rank. The qualification for voting a moderate degree of *intelligence*.”

A.

My friend is a man of intelligence.

B.

“Debt to be regarded as a moral obligation only, and no legal enforcement to compel payment.”

A.

Here are extracts from the letter of the second.

B.

“I would have every man *thoroughly educated* and taught to know himself—communities, nay, even nations, might become,

and *probably would be*, as fearful of giving pain to each other, as are well-regulated and *affectionate families*."

A.

That is to say, a man living on one side of the globe shall love all his antipodes whom he never saw, and whose language he cannot understand, with the same fondness with which a mother loves her child—and so the law of parental affection, or love of offspring, become an unnecessary law. Go on.

B.

"I would adopt that really admirable suggestion of Mr. Owen—his first—'co-operation for mutual benefit'—in the place of that selfish, inhuman, and abhorrent principle of competition."

A.

Whatever is universally practised by *human* beings cannot be *inhuman*—and *selfishness* is the strongest of all nature's laws.

B.

"My panacea, you will perceive, is founded on the real and absolute elevation of what is called the lower classes—and the nominal, but not real lowering of the upper. I am decidedly and unequivocally of opinion that no happiness can be complete that does not give to ALL the highest degree of intellectual refinement. I claim for *all mankind* an equal and *inalienable right* of being rendered physically happy by the possession of abundance of food, and raiment, and shelter."

A.

'Tis as possible for possible things to be impossible, as for things which we see every day *alienated*, to be *inalienable*. For it is surely clear that that which is *inalienable* cannot be *alienated*. There can be no such thing, therefore, as this "*inalienable right*" which the writer claims for all mankind."

B.

"All the cravings of nature ought to be satisfied—BUT under the guidance of REASON."

A.

Whose reason?

B.

The writer does not say.

"See that beautiful village—beautiful as a whole, and beau-



tiful in every part. Nothing meets the eye but what is perfect symmetry—sculpture breathing with life *externally*, and paintings more lovely, if possible, than nature itself, cover every wall *internally*. In every house is a room stored with well-chosen books. In one of the rooms is the humblest inhabitant of this village. Look at him—there is intelligence and benevolence beaming in his countenance. He has just returned from the cultivation of that well-stored and well-arranged farm. He has finished his six-hours' cheerful labor, and has entered his study that he may exercise his mental powers, as he has done his bodily. What do I see on his table? There is Horace, and Virgil, and Cicero, and Demosthenes. There is Euclid and Bacon, Locke and Horne Tooke."

A.

Horne Tooke! No—not Horne Tooke—that's impossible!

But whither am I *to go* in order to *see* this "happy village?" *Has* it ever existed, or *can* it ever exist anywhere but in the writer's fancy? And would it be thought and felt to *be* a "happy village" by men of *all tastes*?

It is quite manifest that this state of things, as well as that imagined by the Agrarian lawgiver, could only be effected by an entire subversion of all the laws of human nature, and of the appetites, passions, tastes, instincts, and caprices of men. My object, however, is not to argue against the opinions of my friends, but simply to place them in juxta-position.

The third enters pretty minutely into detail, under the heads of government, religion, education, and the administration of justice. Contrary, however, to the Agrarian lawgiver, he mentions *property* as a necessary qualification of voters. (My friend is a man of property.)

I wrote again to this gentleman, saying, that I did not desire to know the *machinery* with which he proposed to work, but only the results which he desired should be produced by the agency of that machinery. To this he replies: "I freely confess I cannot answer your question satisfactorily. I have given you a brief outline of the *machinery* to be used in the management of society, as far as it can be managed, *and the result I would leave.*"

Now to construct a piece of machinery without knowing before-hand what is the nature of the work which it is intended to accomplish—and to set it agoing and adoining without knowing whither it is to go, and what it is to do—looks to me a little like beginning at the wrong end.

Now here are three legislators, intelligent men, having paid a good deal of attention to politics, all reformers, yet each differing fundamentally from the other two, and seeking to adopt a form of government, and a state of society, which the other two could not approve.

It is quite clear that not one of these lawgivers legislates for the public good, but only in order to bring about that state of society which would best please HIMSELF—without even stopping to inquire whether the same condition would be equally pleasant to *other folks*. Each one is, in fact, only legislating for his own particular mode of happiness; and thinks that no man can be happy unless it be after *his own fashion*. He measures the likings and dislikings of all the world by his own—and erects his own opinions, his own tastes, his own habits, his own feelings, into a standard by which he would have all other men level and measure their own. It is precisely the same—there is not an iota of difference—as though a man, who prefers roast mutton to all other food, should insist upon all mankind preferring the same dish.

So much for human legislation founded on human opinion, instead of on the infinite wisdom manifested in the laws of nature.

It is curious to hear men daily boasting of their love of nature, and abhorrence of art—deprecating the worst of all possible crimes by the terms of “*unnatural and monstrous*”—and yet living, daily and hourly, all their lives, in constant hostility to nature and her laws—THE SLAVES OF THE ARTIFICIAL.





## ERRATA.

- Page 43, line 15 from top—for *understood*, read *understand*.  
43, line 20—for *definitely*, read *definitively*.  
43, last line—for *Lord Tenterden*, read *Mr. Justice Little-  
dale*.  
44, line 28—for *Lord Tenterden*, read *Mr. Justice Little-  
dale*.  
74, line 28—for *dreone*, read *dreore*.  
88, last line but 1—for *repetition*, read *reputation*.  
111, line 24—for *Mocheles*, read *Moscheles*.  
352, line 6—after *understand* insert *them*.  
354, line 17—for *λαωυ*, read *λαων*.  
388, line 25—for *sense*, read *senses*.  
408, line 27—for *these*, read *their*.  
422, line 20 }  
422, line 21 } for *mœnan*, read *mænan*.  
424, last line but 3—for *is*, read *are*.  
424, line 14 from bottom—after *gen* insert *or gn*.

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## DIRECTIONS TO THE BINDER.

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*Jan. 1871*

*724*









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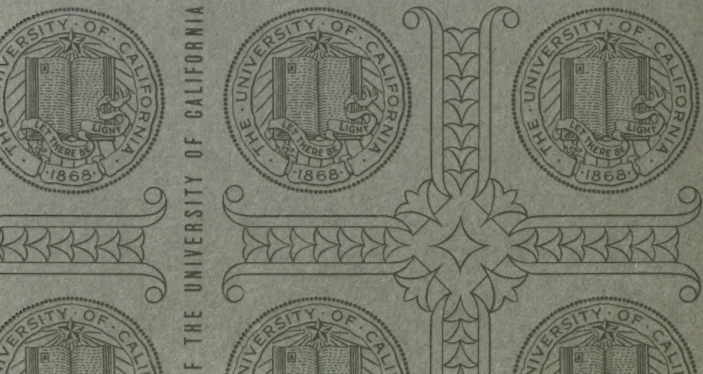
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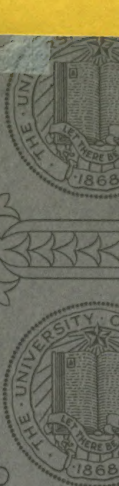
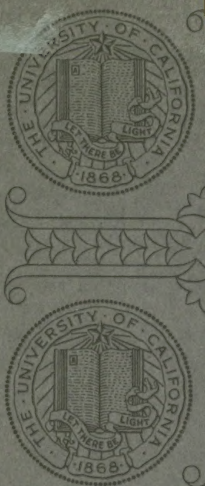






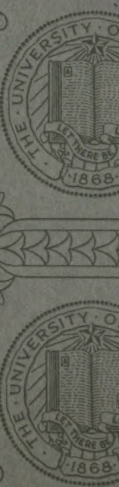
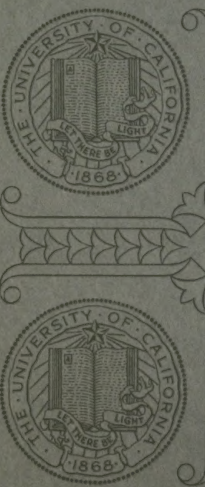
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